SHORT STORIES.

No. 748.] Week ending May 2nd, 1903. [Price One Penny.

"BY HEAVEN, I RECOGNISE YOU! YOU ARE LADY MADRESFIELD—MURDERESS!"

(A Dramatic Incident from the Story, "The Mystery of Madresfield Towers." See inside.)

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Short Stories

No. 748.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending May 2nd, 1903.

The Mystery of Madresfield Towers.

A Story of Love and Sacrifice.

Containing the Incident Depicted on the Cover.

"You did not expect to be found out. No, you thought you had managed your theft too cleverly for that. You young scoundrel, I'll give you into custody though you are my wife's brother. Not a word, Chèrie; not a word in his defence. What I've said, I'll do."

Lord Madresfield glared vindictively at the two young creatures who cowered before him. He was not much over sixty, but he looked an old, old man, for his constitution had been shattered by dissipation in early life, and his health was wretched.

Five years ago he had taken it into his head to marry, and had selected the daughter of an old friend, who, ruined in health and in pocket, had been glad to force his seventeen-year-old girl into a marriage with the wealthy peer by way of provision for her future.

He had died shortly after the wedding, leaving his only other child, a lad of fourteen, to Lord Madresfield's care. Graham Le Mesurier found a home with his sister and her husband, but it was not a happy one.

Lord Madresfield's fancy for his wife soon gave place to indifference, and he never liked the boy, so he made their lives as miserable as he well could. Through Chèrie's devoted love for her brother he tortured her, and enjoyed her agony.

"Yes," he resumed, after gloating for a moment or two over the terror on the white faces before him, "I have made up my mind. I'm not going to be robbed with impunity. If Harland, my valet, had helped himself to my money I should send for the police. I shall do the same with you."

And with that he marched out of the room.

"Do—do you think—he—he *means* it, Graham?" faltered Chèrie after a pause.

The boy nodded gloomily.

"Old *brute*," he said, with emphasis, "I wish he were dead, I do. *Why* isn't he dead? He is always ill and messing about with quack medicines. *I'd* give him a dose if I dared. If only I were sure not to be found out, I'd put something in his medicine that would cure him of all complaints."

"Oh, don't talk so wildly," cried his sister. "You don't mean it, I know, but——"

"*Don't* I mean it, though? There are lots of chemicals about the house—your photographic things, for instance—a dose of which would soon put an end to him, and I'd have no compunctions about getting rid of him, if only for your sake. He's a brute to you, Chèrie."

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"Never mind that, dear. Only tell me—you did not take his money, did you?"

The lad looked at her remorsefully.

"I'm sorry, Chèrie, but—I did. It was only five pounds, and Desmond Fancourt put me up to it. I can't help fancying he told the old man about it, for how else it was found out I can't think."

Chèrie broke into heartrending sobs, and threw herself on a couch in an agony of grief. Graham knelt beside her, kissing her, and trying to comfort her.

"Don't cry, darling. I'm not worth your tears. I'm sick of this life, Chèrie, and I won't stay longer. I've been betting and getting into mischief—Desmond led me into it—but I'm going to turn over a new leaf. Leslie Atherton has promised to help me to get into something, and to-night—he is to dine and sleep here, I know—I'll ask him to do all he can to get me away from here at once."

Chèrie sat up, and fixed her sweet, mournful brown eyes on her brother.

"Oh, Graham, if you will be guided by Leslie, and never listen to Desmond, I shall not fear for you. Now I am going to Madresfield to plead for you. I know he will never prosecute my brother."

"If he does I swear I'll kill him," cried Graham.

Chèrie was right. Lord Madresfield had never had any intention of prosecuting his young brother-in-law, but it cost Chèrie a hard battle to gain assurance of this. Her husband poured out the vials of his wrath upon her, and abused her quite frantically.

His loud, screaming voice, raised to hysterical pitch, Chèrie's sobs of fear and grief, drew the attention of the servants, and two or three lingered round the door, half inclined to interfere, especially when the sound of a heavy blow was heard, followed by a low cry of pain.

But after that all was quiet, and Chèrie appeared at dinner in the evening, very pale, but composed, and looking lovelier then ever, though there was a great bruise on her snowy shoulder which had taxed her maid's ingenuity to conceal under a cloud of chiffon.

The only guests at dinner were Desmond Fancourt, Lord Madresfield's nephew and heir presumptive, and Leslie Atherton, a distant connection of the family. Both were handsome, distinguished-looking men, dark, tall, and thirty years of age.

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Graham did not appear, and his sister longed for the evening to be over that she might relieve his mind with the assurance that Lord Madresfield had relented.

The old man retired early to rest, and after a little conversation with her guests, Chèrie pleaded a headache and went to her room.

Dismissing the maid she sat by the fire for an hour or so, sadly meditating on her shadowed life, until noticing that it was already past midnight, she went to her brother's room, tip-toeing past her husband's door, from which came the murmur of voices.

He was troubled with insomnia, and liked to have someone to talk to, so his valet, Harland, was often on duty in his master's room until daybreak.

Graham's door was locked, and no answer came to Chèrie's low tap and gentle call. She waited a little, and then went back to her room, resolved to wait till morning with her good news.

"My lady! My lady!" said a terrified voice in Chèrie's ear next morning. "Oh, my lady, wake."

"I am not asleep," returned Chèrie. "What is it, Robson?"

"It's something awful, my lady. Harland went in as usual to his lordship's room with the Benger's food he takes at seven o'clock and he found—oh, my lady!"

"Found what?" cried Chèrie. She had jumped out of bed, slipped into a dressing gown, and thrust her pretty white feet into slippers.

"His lordship is dead, my lady," said the maid, very solemnly.

"Dead!"

"And the doctor says my lord has been poisoned."

"Poisoned!" repeated Chèrie, and into her mind came her brother's threats of the day before. Could Graham have been driven to this terrible deed?

Eagerly she questioned Robson. Harland, it seemed, had at once, on finding his master dead, summoned Desmond Fancourt, the new Lord Madresfield, who had promptly undertaken the direction of affairs, and he, the doctor, and Leslie Atherton, and her brother were now in the death chamber, awaiting the arrival of the police.

Pale and shivering, Chèrie crept back to bed.

"I feel sick and ill, Robson," she whispered. "This is a fearful shock. Leave me to myself; I am best alone. No; I will have no brandy, no tea; nothing. Only leave me alone. Don't disturb me until I ring. I shall not be wanted. The direction of affairs is in other hands. My reign here is over."

Robson retired, weeping ostentatiously, and speedily forgot all about her mistress in the delicious excitement of a tragedy in the household.

The moment she was gone, Chèrie sprang out of bed once more, and began pacing the room in a storm of anguish. It was not grief for her husband that overwhelmed her; he had been a hard, merciless tyrant to her, and, though this sudden death shocked and awed her, she could not sorrow for him.

All her thoughts were for her brother. She never doubted that he had committed this terrible crime, and her one idea was to save him from its consequences. But how?

Married before her seventeenth birthday, doomed ever since to a life of seclusion by a cross-grained valetudinarian, Chèrie was, at twenty-two, as ignorant of the world and as simple-minded as a child of twelve.

It struck her that if she could draw suspicion on herself for a time, her brother would have an opportunity to escape, and, without forming any further plans, she resolved upon flight.

If she disappeared suspicion would rest upon her, and, while she was being pursued, Graham would have time to get away in safety.

It was not until late in the afternoon that Chèrie's flight was discovered. She had been inquired for, but her illness and desire for quiet, as reported by her maid, were so very natural under the circumstances that her wishes were respected, until the detective, whose professional services had been called in, asked to see her.

Robson was sent with a respectful message, but returned after a lengthened absence, in a great flurry.

"My lady's gone," she cried. "I've looked everywhere, and there's not a sign of her in all the house."

"Then," exclaimed Desmond Fancourt, or Lord Madresfield, as he now was, "the mystery is solved. Lady Madresfield is the murderess of her husband."

With the exception of her brother and of Leslie Atherton, this was the general opinion.

At the inquest, it appeared that Lord Madresfield and his wife had lived most unhappily together, that there had been a terrible quarrel on the night before his death, during which the husband had furiously struck his wife, that she had been seen by a belated servant, stealing down the corridor leading to Lord Madresfield's apartments long after midnight, and after she had dismissed her maid and ostensibly gone to bed.

It also appeared that, being an ardent photographer, the poison had been ready to her hand.

Again it appeared that Lord Madresfield was in the habit of frequently altering his will, and that one made some months before, when the young wife chanced to be high in favour, had left her, the estates being unentailed, practically everything he possessed.

Later, however, Lord Madresfield had made a fresh will, leaving everything to Desmond Fancourt, except a small annuity to his wife, to whom he showed the will, vowing it should be his last. This will could not be found.

With all this mass of evidence, coupled with the mute, but expressive evidence of her flight, it is scarcely surprising that the coroner's jury brought in the verdict of wilful murder against Charila, Lady Madresfield, and that a warrant was issued for her arrest.

But Charila, Lady Madresfield, seemed to have vanished into thin air. No out-door clothing had been missed, and yet, without them, she could not have gone far in that bleak November weather unremarked.

No one knew that an imbecile beggar-woman was in the habit of lurking in the grounds of Madresfield Towers for the purpose of attracting the attention of its kindhearted lady, and that from her last interview there she had gone away the poorer by her long cloak and battered sailor hat, and the richer by a goodly heap of silver.

* * * * *

Nell, the flower-girl, as she was known among others of her trade, tramped wearily along to take up an advantageous position at Westminster Bridge.

Perhaps a very close observer might have noted the signs of gentle birth in Nell's clear-cut, refined features, shell-like ears, and small, well-shapen hands and feet, but a ragged gown and apron, a faded shawl, and a battered, aggressive-looking straw hat do not lend distinction to the wearer, and the casual passer-by merely remarked that she was a very pretty girl.

Nell had had no luck all day. It was the end of March, and that turbulent month, having come in like a lamb, was going out in the most lion-like manner.

People did not care to stop and buy flowers in a cutting wind, and it was growing very late besides, so Nell looked up anxiously as a gentleman paused in front of her.

She had selected a lovely spray, and was about to proffer it when her blood turned to ice by a well-known voice exclaiming:

"By Heaven! I recognise you! You are Lady Madresfield. Murderess!"

It was Desmond Fancourt—the present Lord Madresfield.

She gazed at him, helpless, fascinated.

"Come with me," he said imperiously. "I must talk with you. There is a nook not far off, a little alley. Here it is. We can talk there without being remarked. Now tell me, how have you managed to escape justice so long? Where have you lived these past three months?"

"Why do you question me? What have I done?"

"What have you done, woman? You poisoned my poor, helpless old uncle, and then, terrified at what you had done, you ran away."

"I did not poison him," she forced from between her rigid lips. "Let me go. You have no right to keep me."

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"I ought to give you into custody," he replied sternly. "Do you know that there is a warrant out for your arrest?"

"But I am innocent," she said simply.

"You'll find some difficulty in proving it. But, for the honour of the family, I'm not going to give you into custody. I'm going to take your future into my own hands. Will you meet me here to-morrow night, at midnight? You need not try to evade me, for if you do, I shall put the police on your track."

"I'll come," she promised. "But tell me, where is my brother?"

"Not far from here. He is sharing Atherton's chambers at present, I believe."

"Where?"

He told her, and, with another warning not to try to escape him, he turned away.

Graham Le Mesurier came swinging along towards home at a great pace, and was turning in at the door of the "Mansions," where he lived, when he nearly ran against a flower girl standing there. He gave one look into her face, and drew her swiftly into the shelter of the porch.

"Chèrie, my poor little sister!" he breathed. "Come upstairs quickly, dear. There's no one about. Here we are. Leslie, I have found her. I have found Chèrie."

Atherton started up in astonishment.

"Chèrie! In this disguise! Do you know you are suspected of murdering your husband?"

Chèrie sank wearily down on a low chair.

"Yes," she replied faintly. "I—I wanted them to suspect me."

"You *wanted* them to suspect you?" repeated Atherton in profound astonishment. "But why? *We* never doubted you, Graham and I. We know you are innocent."

She turned her sweet brown eyes on her brother's face, but it only expressed the tenderest sympathy.

"Why did you do it, dear?" he asked gently.

"I thought you—oh, Graham, I was afraid that you——"

"Good Heavens! You thought *I* was guilty?" he interrupted, aghast. "Chèrie, how could you?"

"You said—oh, you said—about poison," she faltered.

"My poor little self-sacrificing sister, you ought to have known me better. I did not mean a word I said. My dear, how pale you look! How you must have suffered!"

He had got out wine and sandwiches, and she ate ravenously, while the two men watched her with anxious eyes.

"I haven't had much food to-day," she said, attempting to smile, "but I feel better now, and will tell you all."

It was a very pathetic little tale, and brought tears to the eyes of both men. Then she told them of her encounter with the new Lord Madresfield, and of her promise to meet him again on the morrow.

"He's very bitter against you," said Graham; "and spoke of you in such terms after your flight was discovered that Leslie and I both quarrelled with him and have heard nothing of him since we left Madresfield Towers. You acted nobly, my dear sister, but yet, it was an act of madness."

"It was," she agreed sadly, "but at the time I thought it the right thing to do. How could I have doubted you, Graham? But who *could* have been guilty?"

"I have an idea," began Leslie, meditatively stroking his moustache; "not yet ripe enough to discuss, but still, an idea. I distrust Harland—your husband's valet—and believe he did not speak the truth at the inquest. I know where he is, and shall interview him the first thing to-morrow."

"Ought I to give myself up?" asked Chèrie, but Leslie shook his head.

"Not yet. Not until you've seen Madresfield again."

* * * * *

It was a wild night, dark and tempestuous. Chèrie shivered as she stood waiting Desmond's arrival, and shivered as she looked into his fierce, deadly pale face as he came up.

"I have made up my mind about you," he began abruptly. "For the honour of the name I will save you from public disgrace. You shall go abroad, but I will supply you with funds to live on in another name. But first, you must sign this confession of your crime which I have written out."

"I am innocent," said Chèrie, putting aside the paper, "and I have decided to stand my trial."

"You fool, if you do, nothing can save you from the gallows. You are the only one who had anything to gain by your husband's death. The evidence against you is overwhelming."

"You have some reason for wishing me out of the way," she retorted. "Perhaps, because if I am got rid of, you will be master of Madresfield Towers."

"I am that already. The missing will has turned up, the one leaving me everything, and you, only two hundred a year. You forgot that latest will when you murdered your husband. For you did it, you know."

"You villain, you did it yourself," cried the girl, in a flash of inspiration. "I see it all now. You murdered my husband. I know you did."

"You know too much," he said between his teeth, and in another moment he had her by the throat in an iron grasp that held her rigid, unable to move, or cry out, or draw a breath. Everything swam before her, and her senses failed her. Then the iron grip relaxed and she drew a long breath, and opened her eyes to see Madresfield struggling in the grasp of Atherton.

"You villain, you infernal villain," panted Leslie, "we were just in time to prevent another murder. *Another*, do you hear? Harland has confessed. Ha! you know what that means, do you? Graham, help; he'll get away."

There was a fierce struggle. Chèrie heard the frantic blowing of police whistles, cries, shouts, the noise of running feet, and then came the sound of a revolver shot, and Chèrie lost consciousness in a dead faint.

* * * * *

More than a year had passed since the trial of Lady Madresfield, for her husband's murder had provided a nine days' sensation for the public.

Desmond, Lord Madresfield had succeeded in wounding himself fatally, but he lived long enough to make a full confession of his guilt, and this, together with Harland's evidence, fully exonerated Chèrie.

Desmond confessed that, being in financial difficulties, and knowing that his uncle had made a will in his favour, he resolved to get rid of the old man before a fresh will could be made.

He at first arranged matters to cast suspicion on Graham Le Mesurier, but the opportune flight of Lady Madresfield had drawn it on herself and suited him even better.

He had administered the poison in a mixture his uncle took for his cough, and with Harland's knowledge, though Desmond contrived to make the man believe it was a harmless sleeping-draught which Lord Madresfield wished to try.

Afterwards Desmond lulled the valet's scruples by promising him a large sum of money. Desmond had hidden the will in his favour, wishing to make the case still stronger against Chèrie, and meaning to produce it when it suited his purpose.

It was a sweet, fair June day, as Chèrie, once more mistress of Madresfield Towers, paced the terrace, waiting the arrival of her affianced lover, soon to be her husband, Leslie Atherton.

Her eyes brightened as she saw him approaching, and her whole face beamed such a welcome that she scarcely needed to speak. The lovely scene lay smiling before them bathed in "the light that never was on land or sea," and as they stood together looking out on the fair prospect, Chèrie's heart thrilled with joy.

"How bright everything looks!" she murmured. "There is not a shadow anywhere."

"And the shadow has been lifted from your life, sweetheart," he said tenderly. "All your life shall be bright from henceforth, bright as my love can make it."

She raised her eyes to his face with a look of touching love and confidence.

"Ah, yes, Leslie," she said, "the shadow is gone from my life for evermore. Henceforth, I live in the sunshine—the sunshine of your love."

Vera Serkoff.

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THE USURPER.

The Story of What a Baby Did.

Warren Billings looked yearningly across the breakfast-table at his young wife, and his wife looked tenderly at the baby she was holding. A year ago Billings could have felt sure that his wife was looking back at him across the table, looking with love and pride, but now she looked only at the child.

The cloth was still snowy, the coffee-pot was without a speck, the china was of the daintiest, but Billings, who used to feel his wife's especial care for him in the perfection of the table, now knew he owed its present perfection to a well-trained maid.

As he gazed searchingly at his wife, he realised that the beauty of her face had changed. Her radiant colour had faded, and the face she now bent so caressingly over the child was gentle and wan.

"Suppose you let the nurse take baby, Marie?" he said quietly. "I have something important to tell you."

"Hush, baby! Hush, darling!" said the young mother, soothing the fretful child with a concentrated tenderness that made Billings realise how much apart he was from his wife's thoughts. "I'll hold baby, Warren, never mind calling the nurse."

"I have won the Dixon case," he said tersely. The Dixon case was the battle this strong young man had been fighting to win a high place at the bar. It had been their common ambition. Over its vicissitudes she, too, had watched breathlessly, and for its winning she had prayed—before the child had come. But, when at last victory had come, he, single-handed, had won it; for the baby had come to Marie.

"Oh, Warren!" she cried.

Billings hastily pushed back his chair to come to her, but the baby wailed peevishly. Instantly his wife's head was bent low over the child, and she thought only to comfort that which stirred against her breast. The radiance died out of her face, leaving it sweetly troubled—the face of a Madonna.

"I am afraid baby is not quite well, Warren!" she said hastily. "You must ask Doctor Blake to call as you go to the office."

"I have won the Dixon case, Marie," he repeated doggedly, coming no further round the table.

"I am so glad for you, dear," she said, without looking up. "It means a lot for you, doesn't it?"

"A lot for us," he broke in almost roughly. "It means a fee of one thousand pounds, and other important cases. It means for us whatever you may want it to mean, Marie. I had hoped that it would mean a trip to the Continent for you and me this summer. I am tired. I had planned to wander once more over the journey we made four years ago. Do you remember, Marie?"

"Our wedding journey," she said softly. Billings came to his wife and bent over her. But the thought of that journey moved some impulse in her that made her crush the child in her arms till it cried fretfully. "But I couldn't leave baby, Warren," she added hastily.

Billings straightened up and turned away. "You could leave the child with its grandmother for a couple of months," he said. "Baby is a year old now, and is quite well."

"Oh, I couldn't leave baby!" she repeated with great conviction.

"Very well," said Billings, and he left the dining-room without looking at her again. "I shall dine at the club to-night," he called from the hall.

She looked up from the child, vaguely disturbed. She hesitated, then called to the nurse, "Take baby a moment," she said, then hastened into the hall. Billings had gone. "But he never kissed me," she said, somewhat troubled; then she went back to the child.

Billings was a favourite with Matthews, the head waiter at the club. The dinner Matthews set before him was a lure, as Billings seldom dined at the club of late years. But Billings dined in an absent-minded way that cut Matthews to the heart.

Several men strolled over to congratulate Billings on winning the Dixon case, but none of them felt inclined to join him at dinner that night.

"Billings is going to seed," growled old Baldwin, as he came back to the party at his own table. "He stays at home too much."

When Matthews had brought Billings his coat, Billings marched away without remembering the tip that he never had forgotten before. Matthews mourned not the tip, but the sorrow that evidently had come to Billings.

It was late that night when his cab left Billings at his own door. He turned his latch-key, and went upstairs very softly.

On the landing he stood irresolute for a moment, then opened the door to his dressing-room, which had once been devoted to his use, but now a brass crib, canopied with lace, stood where the dressing-table had been, and the furnishings of the room were the useful and convenient things of a nursery.

The door to their bedroom was open, and the room was lighted with the glow of a little night lamp. Billings walked quietly to this door and looked in.

He saw the beautiful profile of his wife nestled against a pillow. He noted the long lashes curving from her closed eyelids, a little hollow in the smooth of her cheek, and the plaintive droop of her mouth.

He saw the rounded white of her throat and the rise and fall of her bosom beneath lace and silk. One loose sleeve had slipped back on the arm that lay outside the coverlet. He noticed how fragile the wrist seemed.

Billings looked till his heart ached. From the day he first had seen Marie he had measured the success of his life by the love he could win from her. In all his strong living the ambition to be loved greatly by this beautiful woman dominated every other desire.

The woman sleeping there so quietly as he yearned over her was the shrine at which he worshipped with perfect willingness to sacrifice whatever offering might be acceptable to her, so that she loved him greatly, so that she chose him over again before all other things life could offer her. Warren Billings' wife was Warren Billings' passion, and he was a passionate man.

Turning, he looked at the crib, then back to his wife; he saw the shadow of a little child grow large between them. Billings loved his child as men love babies, but he loved his wife even more because of the suffering this child had brought to her; but she loved the little life that had made her suffer. A sense of injustice struggled with his loneliness as he knelt beside the crib.

"Baby! Baby!" he said softly. "Give me back my dear wife. I love her more than you love her, baby. I love her with a grown man's love, and you love her just because she feeds you and rocks you to sleep. She is only a nurse to you,

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baby, but she was my comrade until you came. You have taken my goddess to make her your nurse.

"I cannot hate you, baby, you are such a helpless little chap; but sometimes I wish you were a man and weighed more than I do. Yet you are stronger than I, little one, for your cries make her forget my whispers, and the clutch of your tiny fingers is stronger than the might of my arms.

"No, I cannot find it in my heart to hate you, though you have made me a lonely man before my time. You have only to cry with a fancied pain, and she cannot hear that I have won the Dixon case. It used to be our Dixon case before you dethroned me. Give me back the heart of my wife, little son!"

The baby stirred fretfully, and Billings starting to his feet, glanced hastily over his shoulder. The long lashes still fringed his wife's eyes. He stole to the bed and kissed her white arm reverently. Then he went softly from the room.

In the library he turned up the lamp on his desk, and threw himself wearily into a great leather chair.

He was tired, tired from the last strain of his legal battle, tired of arguing against the dreariness that had grown on him during the last few months.

He leant back in the great chair, smoked moodily for a while and fell asleep.

The light at his elbow shone full on his clean-cut face, bringing out its strength and revealing its sadness too. Sleep strips off all disguises which the will imposes.

Sleep and the light shining so steadfastly on his unshrinking face brought out deep lines about the mouth and eyes; he looked haggard.

All this Marie Billings saw as she stood in the doorway looking at him with misty eyes. Her cheeks were flushed and her bosom rose and fell tumultuously beneath the silk and lace of her gown.

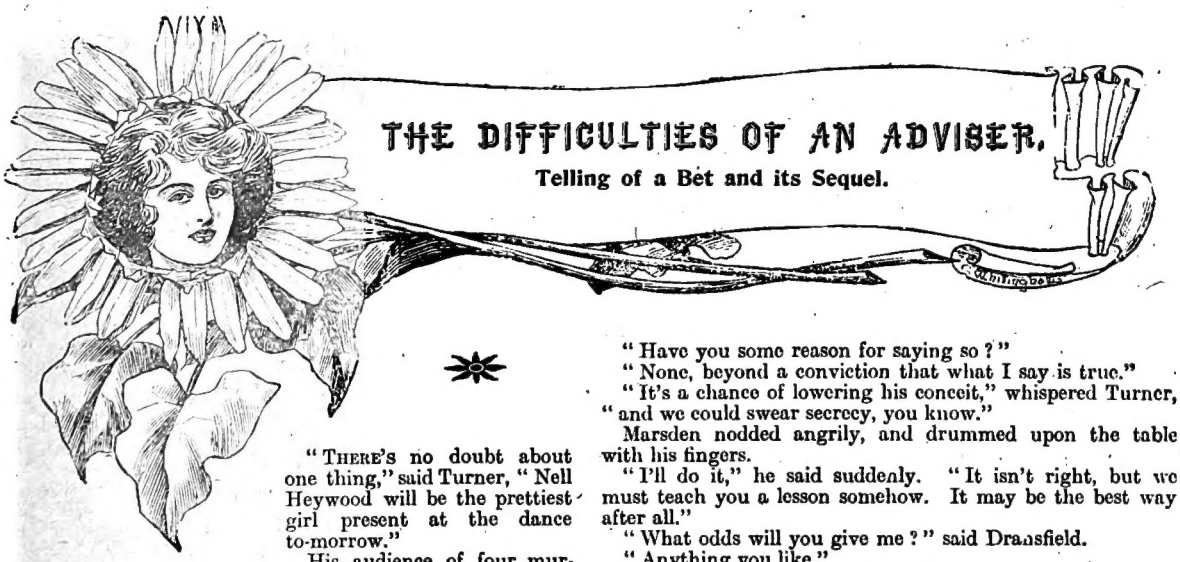
Her face was radiant with love and tenderness as she hastened to him in the silence and knelt beside his chair. She hastily put her bare arms about him; drawing herself close to him, she kissed him passionately. So Warren Billings awoke to the love of his wife.

"I want to go on the Continent with you, dear," she was saying, half crying. "I want to tell you how proud I am of your winning the Dixon case—our Dixon case.

"I want to tie your crumpled tie, dear, as I used to tie it before I neglected you so shamefully. But don't hate baby, dear, because baby only makes me love you more and better. When I love baby, Warren, I love you. I did not realise that a man might not understand. Now kiss me."

Billings kissed his wife and kissed her again. "Now let's go and kiss that blessed baby," he said at last.

A. C. McKenzie.



THE DIFFICULTIES OF AN ADVISER.

Telling of a Bet and its Sequel.

"There's no doubt about one thing," said Turner, "Nell Heywood will be the prettiest girl present at the dance to-morrow."

His audience of four murmured agreement, and cast curious glances at one of the party, who was known to be desperately in love with the girl mentioned.

"That is so," said Dransfield, "are you going to monopolise her, Marsden?"

"Perhaps you think you could cut him out?" suggested one of the others.

"I think she'd say 'Yes,' if I asked her."

"That's a lie," cried Marsden fiercely, "and, what's more, it's a most caddish remark."

"It could easily be proved or disproved," said Turner.

"Yes—if you make it worth my while," interrupted Dransfield.

"Do you actually suggest that we bet upon it?"

"Yes," he answered, his little eyes shining. "You don't expect me to get engaged to a girl I don't care twopence about for nothing. I should have to dance attendance on her for some time before I could make an excuse to break the engagement."

"It would be abominable—it would be an insult to the girl," said Marsden.

"It would prove my words."

"Have you some reason for saying so?"

"None, beyond a conviction that what I say is true."

"It's a chance of lowering his conceit," whispered Turner, "and we could swear secrecy, you know."

Marsden nodded angrily, and drummed upon the table with his fingers.

"I'll do it," he said suddenly. "It isn't right, but we must teach you a lesson somehow. It may be the best way after all."

"What odds will you give me?" said Dransfield.

"Anything you like."

"Four to one," suggested Turner. "A sovereign to five shillings."

"That will suit me," said Dransfield. "Do you agree?"

"Yes," answered Marsden curtly, "and your money shall go into the river; I won't touch it."

"A sovereign you pay me if she says 'Yes'?"

"If I thought there was any likelihood of your winning, I'd declare the bet off now, and you might keep the sovereign as penalty."

"No, no," cried Turner, "the bet is on or off properly."

"Then let it be on," said Dransfield carelessly. "I daresay I shall lose, and it doesn't matter much either way."

Then the four friends swore secrecy, and separated.

* * * * *

"I think this is our dance?" said Marsden to Nell Heywood. "If I may have the pleasure."

She rose and took his arm, and they moved down the room together.

"Do you mind if we sit out?" she asked.

"Not at all. Here, or in the next room?"

"In the next room," she answered, and he felt her arm tremble as she spoke.

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He led the way towards the conservatory, with its cunningly disposed palms and subdued light. Here, he had proposed to her and been refused six months previously, and at the memory his heart burnt within him.

"Do you particularly wish to go into the next room?" he asked. "It's very quiet—the place is in semi-darkness."

"I should like to go if you don't mind."

"I do mind," he whispered passionately. "Do you remember what happened there? Let us stay with the crowd. Have you no heart? I can't tell you. The memory of our last meeting in that room would force me to speak again—and I must not."

"You must not? But take me there, won't you? I don't ask you lightly, Jack. I have something to tell you."

They walked into the conservatory in silence. When they reached the doorway, he was turning to the right, but she pulled his arm gently forward, and led him to the seats he wished above everything else to avoid.

"This is the very same corner," he said. "What is it you want to tell me?"

"You are unkind, Jack."

"I didn't mean to be unkind, or anything else that might cause you a moment's trouble," he whispered, "but you have brought me here, and you don't know——"

"I know what you are thinking about," she answered reproachfully. "Do you really think I have no heart? Do you think that I cannot remember as well as you?"

"I am sorry," he said doggedly. "But you have not told me yet."

She drew herself a little further away from him and used her fan with an indignant energy for a minute.

"It is soon told," she murmured, trying in vain to keep her voice steady. "Your friend Dransfield has asked me to marry him."

"Why do you tell me this?" he said hoarsely. "What have I to do with the matter?"

"I told you about it in order to ask your advice."

"You want my advice?"

"As to whether I shall say 'Yes' or 'No' to him."

The net was closing in upon Marsden. This utterly unforeseen result of the bet staggered him. What could he say to her? How could he honestly answer her question? He wished with every fibre of his being that he had never made the bet, but it was too late to draw back now.

"Why do you ask me?" he said evasively.

"Because I can trust you, Jack, and still more because I remember what we spoke about here six months ago."

"That is done with. It has nothing to do with the present matter."

"No, not if your heart has changed since then."

"It will never change," he said, with a burst of passion; "and you know it, but I must not talk further about that."

"Have I forbidden you?" she whispered gently.

"I understood so, your refusal was definite."

"Six months ago," she said, as though speaking to herself.

"Why do you ask me about Dransfield's proposal?" he asked, trying hard to restrain himself.

"Because I will follow your advice—whatever it may be."

"I cannot advise you."

"I say again that I will do what you wish, Jack—whatever it may be."

"And I say again that I can't advise you. Your mother—ask anybody but me. Oh, I would give my life for you, Nell, a hundred times over, but I can't tell you to say 'Yes' or 'No' to this proposal."

"I can't say more than I have said," she murmured, almost inaudibly; "I will marry whom you wish, Jack—dear——"

"If you really care for Dransfield?"

"Come," she said, in a clear, ringing voice; "let us go back to the ballroom. They will think we are lost."

* * * * *

The next evening Jack Marsden received an unexpected visit from Dransfield.

"I'm glad to see you," he said grimly; "what do you propose to do about this miserable business?"

"I have to pay you five shillings first," replied his visitor, who looked rather crestfallen.

"Keep it. I wouldn't take such money with a pair of tongs," growled Jack, and Dransfield slipped the coins hurriedly back into his pocket with a deprecating smile.

"Please yourself, of course. But look here, Marsden, I want to propose a bargain. Only four of us know about this bet and only you and I know that it has been decided."

"Well?"

"Why shouldn't we let the knowledge remain between you and me? We can tell Turner and Clayton that we have decided to call the bet off, and that no money has been paid on either side."

"A very good idea. It will prevent the possibility of Miss Heywood's name being gossipped about."

"Oh, it isn't that exactly," explained Dransfield, "only as I have not won I don't care for those other fellows to know about it."

"Oh, that's your idea," said Jack contemptuously. "Anyhow, it's a bargain."

After his visitor had gone, Jack put on his considering cap and reviewed the situation as it now appeared. Various remarks made by Nell to him on the previous evening recurred to his memory, but with new meaning.

Every thought that came into his mind brought hope and left behind a doubt, so that after half an hour he was exactly where he began. Then he struck out vigorously in a new direction. "I'll go and ask her," he said.

His timid knock at the door produced Mrs. Heywood, who was in a state of complacent delight. She ushered her visitor into the drawing-room on false pretences and then blandly informed him that Nell was out.

"I suppose you've heard the news," she added.

Jack admitted ignorance.

"About Nell's engagement?"

"What! No, I hadn't heard that, Mrs. Heywood. May I inquire?"

"I can't tell you anything more," said the good lady pleasantly. "It only happened last evening, and Nell asked me not to tell anyone. But here she comes, you can ask her yourself if you like."

Nell walked into the room a moment later, looking prettier than ever. Jack stared at her with a wistful admiration, as he muttered the usual commonplaces. Who was the successful man, he wondered bitterly. Had she changed her mind and accepted Dransfield after all, or was it some total outsider?

"Will you allow me to congratulate you," he said quietly. Mrs. Heywood disappeared, and they were alone.

"Upon what?" said Nell.

"Upon your engagement."

"I am not engaged," she answered, "I only told mother that Mr. Dransfield had proposed to me, and I told you that, Jack."

"And then you asked for my advice?"

"Yes, and you wished me to marry him."

"*I* wished you? I said I could not advise you either way."

"It was the same thing," said Nell, almost bitterly.

"You would not say anything, you were indifferent."

"I could not then, my lips were sealed, but now——"

She was staring intently at the carpet, drawing imaginary lines with one foot. Jack came closer and took her hand and she did not resist.

"Do you still wish me to advise you, Nell?"

"Yes, and I will——"

"You promise to follow my advice."

"Yes." If imaginary lines were real the carpet would have been a network by this time. Jack came closer still so that her hair brushed his cheek. "My advice is," he murmured, "that you should forget everybody else and become my wife."

She turned half way round as he spoke until at the last word her face was hidden against his shoulder. There was silence for a moment and then: "Jack, dear," she whispered reproachfully; "why didn't you advise me this way last night?"

Wal Frank.

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GREAT NEW SERIES.

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

[*For the purposes of these Confessions I am calling myself Maud Cardew, as my real name is too well known for me to wish to make the story of my life public in this manner.*]

The Principals in the Story.

MAUD CARDEW.—The self-made girl.

HON. ROBERT LESTRANGE. (Commonly known as Bobbie.)

REGINALD (DI) NORTHCOTE.

Men who had helped her to come to London and befriended her on her arrival.

I Return From Switzerland.

It began with the Duke coming up to me in the hall next morning quite naturally, and accosting me as if nothing had happened.

"I hope you slept well," he said, "and that your head is better?"

For answer I turned my back on him, and walked across to the door and out into the snow. To my surprise and indignation he had the audacity to follow, and as I could not ignominiously race him up the mountain, I was obliged to let him catch me up.

"I know you are thinking I've got a consummate cheek, Miss Cardew, and various other uncomplimentary things," he began, "but honestly it is not worth while to quarrel. To tell you the plain truth I was only trying a little experiment on you last night, and now I humbly beg your pardon. I behaved like a cad. But I did not in the least intend to insult you; I only wanted to know how you took that sort of thing.

"The last day or two I have been considerably puzzled to reconcile you, as I seem to know you, and your friendship with Lady Filby and her companions. The notion of testing you took my fancy; you can't think how glad I was that you were so angry, although it made me feel a beast. But you ought to forgive me, because you must admit you have laid yourself rather open to that sort of thing in travelling with Lady Filby."

"But I believe in Lady Filby," I said resolutely.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, in a low, incredulous voice. "You believe in Lady Filby!"

I was silent, and we walked on a few paces

"But everyone knows what she is," he said at last, in a perplexed voice, "surely you have friends."

"Yes, but I would not listen to them," I interrupted.

"That was a pity," he said seriously, and was again silent.

"Might I ask if you believe in the Prince and Count as honourable, straightforward men also?" he asked presently.

"It is different with men," I replied sarcastically, "one never expects anything of them."

"Still it is hardly worth while to court unpleasantness."

"I can take care of myself," haughtily.

"Yes, I believe you can," he said. "But if I were you I would not run risks of getting into an awkward place for nothing. If anything went wrong, you see, you might be called upon as a witness, and it would not be nice to be mixed up in that set at all.

"I don't want to shock your susceptibilities, but, Lady Filby, or Lady Fitzclarence, will either of them discredit a girl by their company. If you won't believe your friends at home, you can believe me.

"Jack Filby used to be a great friend of mine, and I happen to know it was for their child's sake he did not show her up. He had a singing master, a subordinate officer on a passenger ship, and an Indian prince named Kia to choose from."

Growing hot and cold all over, and on the point of tears, I quickened my steps almost to a run, but he had not finished yet.

"I do not know why Lady Fitzclarence's husband does not get a separation from her," he said; "but I daresay it's too much trouble. And as for Miss Delaware, also of your party, I can only assure you that no man with a grain of sense would dream of giving her his name."

I stood still suddenly with a gasp of horror.

"And you thought I—was—another?" I breathed.

"No, I did not think so," he answered at once; "but I could not understand how you came to be of the party."

"Oh, it is really all my own fault," I cried. "I deserve to suffer for it. I must return to town at once."

"If I were you I would not be too abrupt," he counselled. "Wire to someone to wire for you, it often saves a lot of bother."

"Perhaps I had better consult Mr. Donovan," I said anxiously.

He looked at me with keen scrutiny, and then remarked in his usual cool way, "I had almost concluded that Mr. Donovan was the attraction."

I flushed angrily.

"Then you can consider yourself mistaken," I almost snapped. "At the same time I dare swear he is as far apart

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from the others as the poles."

"I had observed he was a superior being," he said, with that delicate sneer of his, "but why is he here?"

"I don't know," I replied, "except—except——" as a sudden light dawned upon me, "I believe I asked him to come."

"Ah!" significantly, "that would account for a great deal."

"We could both get a wire from the theatre," I said, not heeding him.

"And return together?" he asked, somewhat pointedly.

"Yes, why not?" and I faced him squarely.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, no reason at all," he said, in a way that made me want to shake him, "none whatever." Then he added, "I am travelling to England myself to-morrow, perhaps you will accept our joint escort?"

I said I would ask Mr. Donovan, and we returned to the hotel.

We reached the door just as Lady Filby came up a path in the opposite direction, and I was surprised to see her alone. As she passed us she threw a glance of such vindictive hatred at me that I shrank a moment involuntarily. A second later Lady Fitzclarence appeared with the German count, and judging from her expression, she, too, had passed none too pleasant a morning.

"I hope you have had a nice walk," she said to me sarcastically, "I daresay you found the Duke's naughty tales and glaring flatteries very entertaining."

"I have not any recollection of either," I replied carelessly, "so I think he must have saved them all for you."

"We have been discussing Society in connection with the visitors' list at Grindelwald," said the Duke, thrusting his hands in his pockets with an expression of amusement. "It was really much more entertaining, and open to developments than you might imagine."

Lady Fitzclarence flushed angrily; but with a pretence at good fellowship, patted him on the cheek and remarked—

"Ah, Pip, you do love to try to be sarcastic, don't you?"

Then she, too, flung a somewhat vindictive glance at me before she vanished.

On my way down to lunch a little later I met Yorke Donovan hastening to his room, looking very much disturbed. He stopped me, and without any preliminary exclaimed in a low voice—

"Could you be ready to return to England to-morrow morning?"

"Yes," I said at once. "Why?"

"Meet me outside the English church at two," was all he answered, and hurried on upstairs.

When I joined him he did not speak at first of what had happened, but led the way along the Interlaken road at a pretty stiff pace. Presently, however, he dived straight into the subject.

"I can't tell you much now," he said, "but certain things have come to light this morning that make it impossible for you to remain in Lady Filby's company."

I waited, and presently he added—

"I—I—am afraid I have been much to blame in not finding out sooner."

"But how could you?" I asked. "Did you know anything?"

"I knew there was talk, of course; but I did not pay much attention to it, and, besides, I wanted very much to be here with you. But it was a mistake to come. If you will allow me, I will take you back to England to-morrow."

"The Duke is leaving also," I said, "we can all travel together. I think we had better wire for someone to wire for us."

"Yes, that is a good idea," he said at once. Then he added significantly, "I see you were in a measure prepared for this sudden move?".

"Yes," I said simply, "I was."

He made no further comment, and we tramped along the crisp snow in silence.

I was glad he was silent. I wanted to drink in the loveliness of that winter Alpine scenery, to the exclusion of all else, for the brief while it was possible.

Giant pines spread out snow-laden arms above us, a white carpet of unspeakable purity lay around, blazing suddenly into a cloth of diamonds wherever the sunbeams could find a way through the maze of branches.

Overhead was the deep blue vault of the heavens, bluer than any words can express in that keen atmosphere, pierced here and there with snow-capped peaks rearing their lordly heads above the "littlenesses" of the world. The very silence was a breathing majesty—everything above and around a white radiance of purity.

I tried to forget—I tried to lose myself. My whole being strove upwards, one with those dazzling peaks pointing ever, in storm and sunshine, to the steadfast heavens.

How little, oh, how little, seemed the glare of the footlights, the shouts of applause, the *rôle* of the theatrical conqueror, beside the sublime immutability of these snow-clad mountains. Then it all came back to me—the memory of the morning.

"How can they? Ah, how can they?" I breathed, in a low, passion-strung voice. "In the midst of all this!—in the midst of such unspeakable grandeur—to stoop and grovel in the mud."

"Yes, yes, that is just it," my companion exclaimed tersely. "Here—surely—one might at least be pure. And yet it was here—in such a spot as this—only to-day——" he stopped short, and caught his breath, relapsing at once into silence.

I do not know what it was that had so upset him, except that it concerned Lady Filby, but he did not come in to dinner that evening, nor join us afterwards. Lady Filby evidently chose to think it was my doing, and vented her anger in every little spite possible.

I had made up my mind to retire directly the meal was over, but a veiled intimation that I was going to look for him held me tied, undecided what to do. Then Lady Fitzclarence and the Duke and one or two others joined us, and my way of escape was practically barred.

We were sitting listening to the Duke, who was entertaining us with some of his experiences big game shooting in India, when Lady Filby broke in with—

"Now let someone else tell us of their experiences. You, Maud," with a little harsh laugh, "you must have had some highly entertaining adventures on the stage."

"Nothing very particular," I replied. "Certainly not half so entertaining as the Duke's."

"Oh, come now, I don't believe that!" she said. "What about that motor ride with Cecil Trevor when the motor broke down at night in a little village, miles from anywhere? I'm sure that would make a highly interesting anecdote," and she laughed in a way that made my face burn, Lady Fitzclarence joining in, and all eyes fixing upon me.

For a second I felt dumb with mortification and anger, but I was not capable of acting only on the stage, and played my part now.

"Oh, that!" I said laughingly, "that certainly was rather awkward, but not in the least entertaining. Cecil Trevor and I were both in such bad tempers we could scarcely speak a civil word to each other. We simply went to the nearest inn, ate a big supper in solemn silence, and parted very bad friends."

"Oh, I daresay!" put in Lady Filby spitefully; but I pretended not to hear, and went on:

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"The next morning I went to town by train, and he returned later with the wretched motor, and I never went out with him again."

"Only to little dinners, I suppose," said Lady Fitzclarence pointedly.

I took no notice; the attack was too transparent to parry, so I maintained a haughty silence.

"You know you are such a saint, Maud," said Lady Filby; "it does one good to hear little stories—well, what one might call '*risqué*,' about you."

"Yes," chimed in Lady Fitzclarence, "and there's a lovely one in which a gipsy girl is mixed up—do let us have it?"

I don't quite know what I did, but almost instantly the Duke, who was sitting next to me, got up in a way that tipped his chair over backwards with a good deal of clatter, during which, and while picking it up, he managed to say to me in an undertone:

"Whatever you do, don't lose your temper."

I was grateful to him, partly because it showed me he took their spite for what it was worth, and partly because it made me feel I had a friend near.

"I will tell the story of the gipsy girl," I said quietly, "if every lady present will undertake to explain whatever rumour against herself the rest of the company shall agree to fix on."

"Oh, by Jove!" exclaimed the Duke with enjoyment. "This is no place for me!" while Lady Filby flushed an angry red, and Lady Fitzclarence burst out laughing.

"Come, Betty!" she cried. "Let's begin with the singing-master."

I got up with a feeling of indignation that almost suffocated me.

"I am going out," I said abruptly; "there is something in the atmosphere of this room that positively chokes me."

"Really scandalous, isn't it?" said Lady Fitzclarence mischievously. She always made a jest of everything all her life, and had at least the merit of being honest about herself, whereas I was by no means the only one Lady Filby had deceived by her clever assumption of childlike innocence.

"Most contaminating, I should think," she said now spitefully; "beyond the leavening of even your spotlessness."

Still in a white heat of indignation I pulled on my snow shoes, wrapped myself in my golf cape, and stepped out into the wonderful, glistening world of mountains and snow. In a few seconds, offering no apology for his presence, in the most matter-of-fact way imaginable, the Duke joined me.

I said nothing, but tramped on through the crisp snow, feeling relief in the mere act of walking.

"Awful cats, women!" was his first remark.

"I don't know what I have done to upset them," I said.

"Phew!" and he whistled softly. "It's plain enough. One has set her heart on our handsome actor, who persists in keeping his eyes and his prettiest attentions for you, and the other"—he shrugged his shoulders—"well, everyone doesn't look upon dukes as dust and ashes, you know."

Something made me turn to him suddenly, and somehow, his fair, delicately-chiselled face looked strangely attractive in the moonlight, in spite of its womanishness.

"Why are you here with them, knowing all that you know?" I asked, awakened to the pity of it.

Again he shrugged his shoulders in that careless way of his.

"Oh, even Dukes can't always be seeking new fields to conquer," callously.

"But it is so poor!" I cried. "Can't you see just how paltry it all is?"

He looked at me from under half-veiled eyes, with a little amused twitching at his lips. Then he spread out his hands with another careless shrug.

"It is the way of the world," he said, "and I, for one, find it a pleasant enough way."

"It makes me tired," I said, feeling suddenly bowed as if under a weight of years, at the knowledge of the evil in the world. "I think I am sorry I ever left my home to win success. I would like to see things again as I used to see them—full of beauty, and hope, and achievement."

"You mean you would like to go back to your first illusions?"

I was silent, and presently he drew from me all about my old home, and my descent upon London in search of fame.

Then he asked abruptly:

"Where is it going to end? Have you a goal?"

For one moment I was nonplussed. I felt him watching me keenly, and the blood crept over my neck and face. I looked at the mountains, and before their calm greatness I could not lie.

"I had a goal last week," I said at last; "I am not sure if it is the same to-day."

He did not answer at once, but remained silently gazing at the scenery.

"There are not many goals open to dukes," he said thoughtfully.

"There is always your country!" I exclaimed.

He smiled with that fine sneer of his.

"An old woman's tale," he said. "I have not the slightest ambition to be mixed up in the general jumble known as one's country."

"You might improve it all round," I suggested, with sarcasm.

"That would be a pity," he replied; "it is really a most laughable farce at present, and very harmless."

"If I were a Duke," I said, "I would pretend to be a poor man and win love."

"Not worth it," he sneered. "A lot of discomfort for a mere fancy."

"Then you don't believe in love?"

"Certainly not. Every girl is biassed by her desire for an establishment, and naturally the best of its kind procurable."

I was silent.

"Yet there must be something behind the majesty of the mountains," I said musingly. "Something that has a place in human souls also. It is often difficult to believe in love in London. It is not so here."

He watched me with a strange expression in his eyes but made no comment; and slowly we returned homewards.

The next morning he, Yorke Donovan, and I returned to England. A few days later, as I stood toying with some flowers my maid came to tell me Mr. Northcote was in the drawing-room; and, bracing myself up, I went to my dreaded ordeal with Di.

"Have you come to triumph?" I asked him, feeling it was only what I deserved.

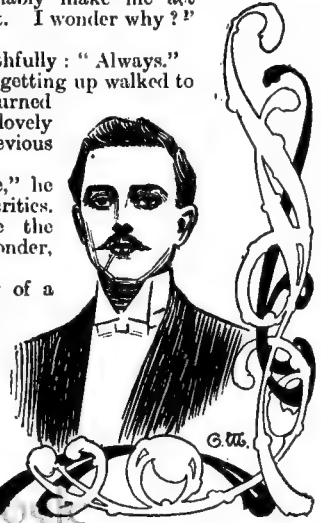
"Have I ever done so?" he said, and I felt the rebuke. It humbled me more than anything.

"You were right all through," I said. "You always are. Yet, somehow, you invariably make me act against my better judgment. I wonder why?"

"Do I?" he asked.

And I answered him truthfully: "Always."

He grew thoughtful, and getting up walked to the window. When he turned again his eye fell on a lovely bouquet, the spoils of the previous evening.



"These tell their own tale," he said; "these and the critics. Beyond doubt you have the world at your feet. I wonder, are you satisfied?"

I did not reply, thinking of a certain talk under the stars my last night at Grindelwald.

"May I ask who gave them?" he said.

"The Duke of Midlandshire," I answered, and he seemed surprised.

"I thought he was abroad," he remarked.

"He was at Grindel-

wald," I told him, "and he returned to England with Yorke Donovan and me."

He walked again to the window.

Suddenly he wheeled round.

"You did not tell me," he said—"are you satisfied?"

"I don't know," I answered slowly. "I am hoping there is still the *best* to come."

When he had gone the Duke came, and evidently they met on the step.

"So you know Di Northcote?" said the latter, establishing himself in an armchair much as Bobbie would have done.

"I have known him ever since I came to London. Why?"

"Strange chap! Half the girls in London would almost give their heads to marry him."

"I don't think so," I said, with somewhat undue resoluteness.

"It's a fact, all the same. He is one of the last men in the world likely to marry, and yet every woman, more or less, wants to marry him."

"But why?"

He shrugged his shoulders in the old way. "Preserve me," he murmured, "from ever having to find reasons for the inclinations of your sex. As a rule they have no reasons. Possibly there is something in the fact that he is a man who could not dissemble, and that must be rather a novelty for your sex in its intercourse with ours."

I did not reply, not being in the mood for repartee. I wanted to think about Di, without knowing why. Yet I was conscious that my goal was before me, and that if I would win it I ought to be playing my part.

I was startled by one of the abrupt, audacious questions the Duke was so fond of asking.

"Why don't you marry Bobbie Lestrange?" said he.

I flushed a little indignantly as I replied:

"Really, Duke, you are somewhat curious concerning my affairs."

"It's only what they're asking in all the clubs," he remarked coolly. "Not high enough position, perhaps?" he continued, scaring me with his unsparing candour.

"Is that the conclusion you have drawn from observations of my actions and words?" I asked coldly.

"Not yours exactly," he answered, "but anyone's in your position."

Bobbie's open scorn and Di's veiled sarcasm had never hit me as did the Duke's candour now. But I could not help liking him for it, and being drawn to a similar frankness. I got up and moved about restlessly, while he sat quietly watching, and at last I said:

"I used to be like that—the same as all the rest; I believe I was like it last week. But I'm not now. I don't know why; something seems to have happened that has turned everything upside down, and I do not recognise my own views and feelings."

"I'm glad to hear you say that," he said, "for I have come here to-day to ask you to be my wife."

(*Next Tuesday I will tell you of the answer I gave to the Duke.*)

Lessee: "That sailors' chorus was awful! What was the matter?" Stage Manager: "The tars couldn't get the right pitch."

"I think the picture lacks atmosphere," said the kindly critic. "Fact is," said the artist, "I had a hard time raising the wind while I was painting."

"I hear you were mixed up in a rather shady transaction last week." "I cannot tell a lie. I was. I bought a couple of blinds for the kitchen windows."

"How do you like your new mamma, Johnny?" asked his uncle. "Oh, pretty well. I ate a pot of jam yesterday, and she put the blame on the servants."

Sympathising London Friend: "Where were the remains of your late husband interred?" Russian Widow (sadly): "There were no remains: he—he—met—a—bear."

Your Editor Chats.

The sixth list of sentences in the competition will be found on page 559. Six more lists will appear, making twelve in all.

From the majority of letters I have received it is very evident that readers have not read the conditions of the competition carefully. Some of the questions they ask in connection with it are very absurd. It will save a great deal of unnecessary waste of time on both your and my parts, if you will consider the conditions very thoroughly before writing to me regarding points on which you are doubtful in your own minds.

Below will be found some questions asked by readers this week, together with my replies:—

Question: If the name of a station consists of two or more words, will all the words be contained in the sentence, or only one of them?

Answer: The complete name of a railway station (or words which sound the same as the name) will appear in every case.

Question: May I fill in the names of railway stations with a typewriter?

Answer: Yes, you may do this.

Question: May I make the name of a railway station out of part of one word alone, or must it be made of either a whole word or consecutive parts of two or more consecutive words?

Answer: You may make the name of a railway station out of consecutive parts of one word. This is stated in the conditions of the competition.

Question: May I make the name "Rye" out of the letters "ri" in river?

Answer: No. The sounds are totally dissimilar.

I am writing this on my return from spending Easter in the country, where the bright sunshine flooded everything with its golden rays, making trees and flowers and fields more of a pleasure to look upon than ever. While I was enjoying this scene my thoughts would dwell on the poor little denizens of the slums who seldom, if ever, have an opportunity of seeing Nature in all her glory, and I wondered how many of them would be able to have a day in the country this year.

Of all the institutions founded for the purpose of brightening these little lives, few are so far reaching in effect as the Fresh Air Fund, which provides a day in the country for the children of the big cities in the British Isles, for the small sum of ninepence each. This sum pays for railway fare and an ample supply of good food. Unlike other Funds there are no expenses of management in connection with the Fresh Air Fund, all these being borne by Pearson's and the Ragged School Union. Every penny of the money subscribed goes in providing pleasure for the children.

I hope readers of *Short Stories* will send something however small, to help on this great work. Cheques, postal orders, or stamps should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Collecting forms will be forwarded on application. All donations will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*.

Your Editor.

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Rose Memories.

Telling of what the Silver Casket Contained.

"WHY, what is this? A silver casket with the monogram 'B—— A——' on it, it must have been my uncle's, I will open it after dinner, the bell will ring in a minute," I thought to myself.

It was barely two months since I had heard of the death of my uncle, Sir Brian Adair, and my consequent succession to the baronetcy. I was in Tasmania when the news was cabled to me by his lawyers, and, needless to say, started for home at once.

I had only seen my uncle once in my life, and as that was twenty-three years ago, it was impossible for me to feel any acute sorrow at his death. The doctors had certified heart disease as the cause of his decease,—but old Mrs. Miles, the housekeeper, told me that it was a broken heart, and nothing else. It seems that my aunt Phyllis died just a year after they were married, and with her lay buried all my uncle's desire to live.

My curiosity was aroused, so I did not take long over my solitary meal, but, having ordered a lamp to be taken to the library, I fetched the casket, and wended my way thither.

With considerable difficulty, I at last succeeded in opening the box. Inside were five little parcels, covered with tissue paper, each bearing a date. I took them out very carefully, and found beneath a document in the form of a diary, in Sir Brian's handwriting. On opening the packages one after the other, I found to my astonishment that they each contained a faded rose.

Having reverently replaced them in their coverings, I settled myself near the lamp to read the story of bygone days with which these faded blossoms were interwoven.

"May 6th, 1857.

"Forty years ago, but I remember it as if it were but yesterday. A little boy of six, with a broken leg, my nurse had wheeled me into a sunny spot in Kensington Gardens, and seated herself on a bench a little distance off, where she soon forgot everything in the delights of a paper-backed novel.

"Other children were playing all around me, but there was I alone, with no one to talk to. A feeling of intense pity for myself stole over me, and soon the tears were trickling down my cheeks. All at once I felt a soft little hand laid on my own, and opened my eyes to behold a little maiden, with dark grey eyes, and wonderful auburn hair, holding out a white rosebud to me.

"'Poor little boy, does it hurt you?—smell this, a nice smell always does me good if I am ill,' and she held the rose whilst I gladly sniffed its fragrance.

"'Oh, don't go, please stay and talk to me,' I stammered, blushing to the roots of my hair, for I was a very shy child. 'My name's Brian—please what is yours?'

"'Phyllis,' my little fairy answered. And she stayed with me quite a long time, telling me all her pretty fancies about rose-fairies, and when she went, bent and kissed me, leaving the bud in my hand."

"Jan. 17th, 1860.

"Phyllis, dear heart, I am recalling happy memories to-night—I have opened my jewel-casket, as I shall always call it, though you once laughed at what you termed my 'silly fancy.' A pink rose—you gave it to me just three years after our first meeting. What a passion you always had for roses, my Phyllis! This one you had picked from a little tree in the hothouse that my father had given you at Christmas.

"It was Fate, indeed, that had made you my father's ward, dear, kind Fate, for you brought sunshine into my lonely life. I was a delicate child, so had been kept at home till I was ten years old.

"I remember so well the day I started off to school for the first time, I cried bitterly at having to part with my little playmate. The train was just about to start, that train that was to take me far away for three months when my father lifted you up in his arms to give me a last kiss, and you stuck this little pink rose in my coat, saying: 'Don't forget poor Phyllis and her roses.'"

July 2nd, 1870.

"The faded petals of a crimson rose—Sweetheart, the flower is dead, but the love that gave it still lives on, and will live for ever. I was twenty, and you were just nineteen. My father had died the previous year, and I was now master of Adair Court, where you and my mother lived with me.

"I had just come down from my second year at Oxford, and directly I saw you again, I knew that the one aim and object of my life henceforth would be to win you for my wife. You were fond of me, I knew, but I was dreadfully afraid lest you should only regard me in the light of a brother.

"A fortnight passed, and I had worked myself up into a fever of longing to hear my Fate. So I took you into the rose-garden—it was always your favourite haunt, and then and there I told my love.

"My wife, my dearest! I can see you now, you were wearing a simple white muslin frock, and as you stood on the narrow path, against a background of crimson ramblers, your grey eyes shone with a new and tender light, and the sun's rays glinted on your hair, making it a halo of gold above your happy face.

"Yet never a word! You looked at me in answer to my question, and turning, plucked a rose, and gave it to me. What need for words? The blossom answered for you."

"Oct. 9th, 1870.

"Just the dust of a Marechal Neil rose, but the scent clings to it still—as my memory clings to the day my Phyllis pinned it to my coat—Our wedding-day!

"Not a shadow fell on our two young hearts, no dread presentiment of the future marred our bliss on that—our wedding day. Looking back through the weary vista of lonely years that have been mine since then, I know that God was strengthening me by a great happiness to endure the anguish that was to come so soon, and I thank Him, for it is given to but few mortals to taste the peace of perfect love."

"Dec. 30th, 1871.

"But one more rose, it was white as driven snow when I took it from my darling, as she lay in her last long sleep. Yet the peace on her face quieted the storm of anguish that swept over me.

"There were no lines for the Master-hand of Death to wipe out, but He had left upon the lifeless clay the indefinable impress of a Love that was stronger than the King of Terrors himself.

"People wonder why I do not hate the very sight and smell of roses, for my darling's room was strewn with her favourite flowers, blooms of every hue, save only that none but the choicest white buds were allowed to touch her lovely form. But why should I hate them for that reason?

"Can they *remind* me of her, whose image never leaves me? Phyllis, twenty years have gone since then, but I am as much your lover now as I was when you gave me that crimson rose. I feel that my probation is nearly over, and that it will not be long before I join you, my wife, in the Land where there are no more partings."

Maud Hoey.

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A FREE OFFER.

The Romance of a Fountain Pen and an Inheritance.

"WHY do they do this kind of thing?" mused Mr. Fred Poynter, surveying an object which he held in his right hand. "To induce trade!" he continued lazily, answering his own question. "If you get a good advertisement, other people buy the wares.

"If you can get a free advertisement, so much the better; if you cannot, then it is better to spend a certain amount than not to advertise at all. That's the only explanation I can find of this generous offer. Really, I should make a good advertising agent if I were not so lazy and did not get my daily bread without doing much for it!"

He laid the object on the table and yawned. As he moved his elbow in the process of settling himself more comfortably in his chair, he knocked a letter from the table to the floor; by an effort, he stooped and picked it up.

"Let me see! What am I to do in order to become the proud possessor of this unique—and all the rest of it—fountain pen? New and improved system," he read. "Oh, of course! They are all better than anything else. And just being placed on the market.

"Oh, here it is! Easy enough to remember, if I had the energy to remember. Now that opens up an idea! Why doesn't it demand energy to forget instead of to recollect? Then we should remember everything, which would be simply grand! Except when a man borrows money and wants to forget the transaction. H'm, didn't think of that! Perhaps the present arrangement is the best, all things considered! Now, for this gift!"

He read the circular letter. It came from an address in London, and he was some sixty miles from the metropolis. He did not recognise the locality, but he had a vague idea that it was a crowded business district. The fountain pen was offered free on the condition that he wrote with it for two hours, and afterwards sent a letter to the patentees affirming that he had done so.

"I don't quite see what that will prove," he murmured. "Oh, without refilling! And then they will publish my testimonial and send me a large bottle of their special ink. Well, some fountain pens will write for longer than that without refilling, but this is much cheaper, and I suppose that's a good testimonial in this case. Lucky they don't ask me to write all that time at a stretch!"

He dropped the letter on the table, reflected a while, and resolved to do what was required. That settled, he dismissed the subject for the time, totally unconscious of what lay behind that offer!

His further meditations were interrupted soon afterwards by the entrance of a child, a girl of about five years. Her intelligent face, her brown eyes, with their quickly-changing expressions, her curly hair and engaging ways, had made this child dear to Fred Poynter.

He took her in his arms and kissed her; then smothered a sigh and placed her against the table, seating her on his knee so that she could reach things without trouble.

"What's this, Uncle Fred?" she asked, her face assuming a puzzled look, as she picked up the fountain pen.

"Oh, that's a pen, Lil! See, I take the top off, you hold it like this and it writes as easily as a lead pencil!"

He placed it in her fingers, and she began to make marks on the back of the letter containing the offer.

"Can I come in and do this—sometimes?" asked Lil, looking up at him.

"Certainly! You can help me to earn it. Capital!"

He watched her idly, and then his thoughts wandered over the history of the previous few years. This child was the daughter of his second cousin, a man of his own age, who had disgraced himself and left his wife and child in want.

Clifford Merton had wooed and won Elsie Prescott, and Fred Poynter, who had loved Elsie but had never urged his love because his position was too mediocre, had carried a wounded heart for more than six years.

He was one of those good-natured, easy-going men who are never likely to rise by their own exertions, and he might still have been living practically from hand to mouth had not circumstances favoured him unexpectedly.

Clifford Merton was nephew to old Charles Gorham, being the son of the latter's sister, who had been a great favourite of Gorham. Consequently, Clifford was selected as Gorham's heir after the old man had made his fortune in Australia.

Clifford Merton had a liberal allowance from his uncle, he appeared happy in his married life, and all went well till about two years before the opening of this story. Then a thunderbolt dropped from somewhere, and the aspect of things changed entirely.

Clifford Merton had been actively engaged in sowing wild oats; he had been betting, gambling, and living extravagantly. He had kept this from his wife, who loved him with a devotion which he did not merit and did not adequately reciprocate.

Finding himself in difficulties, he forged his uncle's name at the corner of one of Gorham's own cheques, and passed it through his own account in order to meet some heavy payments due to clamorous creditors.

The forgery was detected, but old Gorham instructed the bank to honour it, and then sent a cheque for £50 more to his nephew, with the curt remark that if he did not utilise that amount for the purpose of getting out of the country, he (Gorham) would have the forger arrested.

Clifford Merton's real character showed itself. He had expected a different result, and that Uncle Charles would relent and pay other large sums that were nearly due for settlement; so, as his expectations were not realised, and

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things looked awkward, he left the country suddenly, abandoning his wife and child.

The first intelligence which Elsie received of the whole affair was a brief letter from Clifford, telling her what had happened, and suggesting that Uncle Charles would take care of her and the child. Uncle Charles flatly refused to do this; he was a cantankerous old man when put out, and Elsie was compelled to earn a livelihood for herself and child.

Then Fred Poynter was sent for and was told that he must come to live with Gorham, with the idea of ultimately becoming his heir.

Poynter had no objection to being provided with bread already buttered, and he accepted the proposal. He insisted that Elsie should be supported, but the old man was obdurate and Poynter had to drop the discussion.

"I won't leave a penny to that scamp or his family!" raved old Gorham. "And if you send any money to him, or her, I'll send you off!"

Poynter saw that he could do no good by getting out of favour with the old man, so he resolved to accept the position and help Elsie in some other way. He did so, unknown to anybody, even Elsie herself, by having copying work and other forms of light labour sent to her through an agent and paying her liberally for it all.

A year later, old Gorham was found dead in his bed from apoplexy and the will produced by the solicitor was entirely in Poynter's favour.

The will, made at the time Poynter entered the old man's house as prospective heir and manager of his estate, contained the provision that he was to forfeit the whole if he made a bequest of any part of it to Clifford Merton or his family.

"I felt considerable affection for the old fellow," said Poynter to the solicitor, "but the fact that he died and left that provision robs him of some of that affection—robs his memory, I suppose I ought to say. It's simply hard-hearted, and I prefer to think that he didn't mean it.

"Still, I must keep to the terms of the will. I can't give her any of the money, but I cannot be prevented from engaging her as housekeeper and paying her a good salary for it! And that's what I'll do!"

He induced Elsie to take up the position, and he was doing his best to make life happy for her.

"Shall I write to my papa?" asked the child suddenly, as she toyed with the pen.

Drawn from his reverie with a start, Poynter said:

"Er—yes! But he's a long way off!"

Poynter imagined that Merton was still in Central America, whither he had stated that he was going in that heartlessly brief letter to his wife—the last she had heard of him, and he would have been surprised to know that the good-for-nothing was once again in the old country, and journeying towards him with a heart full of hatred and fiendish glee.

There was a knock at the door, and a voice said:

"Is Lily in there, Mr. Poynter?"

"That is your mother, little one!" whispered Fred Poynter to the child. Aloud, he said: "Yes, Mrs. Merton. Come in, if you want her!"

Elsie Merton entered, holding up a finger deprecatingly at Lily as she did so. She was just under thirty; her face had not lost much of its charm, notwithstanding the trouble through which she had passed—the sorrow of two years had rather added a nobler charm to it, and there came a wistful look into Fred Poynter's eyes as they rested upon her.

"Oh, she is not worrying me!" declared Fred. "She likes to come here, Mrs. Merton, and I like to have her." He spoke in his usual deferential manner.

"I think she must come with me now, Mr. Poynter," responded Elsie. "Come along, dear! You can come some other time."

"And write with that pen?" inquired Lily, gazing at Fred's face in some anxiety lest he should say "No."

"Of course!" he said decisively.

The child went off contentedly with her mother.

Poynter had never conveyed to Elsie, by word or act, the fact that he loved her; there were times when he felt that he would like to break the silence, but this otherwise lethargic man could summon enough energy to prevent himself from acting in the remotest manner dishonourably.

Elsie appeared not to suspect the secret that lay in his heart; she did not forget that he had been an admirer in the old days, but he was one of several and the old days were far off!

She understood that he was helping her because he considered it only fair to do so. She was entitled to a share of the money, and this was the one way in which he could enable her to enjoy her rights.

During that same evening there arrived in Motham a rough-looking man who had been exiled from his native land for two years. He had a little money, and he hired a bed for the night at the "Brown Bull." He had shifty eyes, appeared to be always on the alert for danger, and said his name was Robert Brice.

"I'm going for a walk; are there any places of interest about here?" he inquired of the landlord. "You see, my people propose to establish a factory down here; land is cheaper than in a town and labour is cheaper, too.

"I have lived in places where you may be attacked by wild beasts or wild men any moment, so I am always on the watch!" he added nervously, as he noted the suspicious expression of the man's countenance.

"The Manor is about a mile from here," replied the landlord. "That's Mr. Poynter's place; used to belong to old Gorham. It's in that direction," pointing with his forefinger.

"Oh, yes, I know it!" said Brice, with a snarl. Then, remembering, he added quickly, "I mean, I know the circumstances. Who doesn't? Is he married?"

"No. He has Mrs. Merton there as housekeeper! That Merton was a bad lot, you know, but his wife is all right, and Poynter——" Here the landlord entered into details, concluding with, "I wouldn't be surprised if he married her, if the rascal who deserted her should turn out to be dead!"

Brice had turned away in order to prevent his agitation being noticed. When mine host had concluded, Brice uttered a curt word of thanks and left the premises.

"I knew he had supplanted me!" he hissed between his tight-shut teeth. "I guessed it! That's why I got details long ago, and that's why I intend to kill him with that fountain pen!

"I waited to see if the old man relented, but I heard nothing, and I used the knowledge I obtained in Costa Rica from the anarchists. It's worth the cost and risk of coming home!

"I guessed that he would poison the old man against me still more! But I never thought he would try to get Elsie!" An awful expression came from his lips; it seemed to burn the air. "He shan't have her! he won't live long enough for one thing!"

He began to revile the man who had "cheated him out of his inheritance," and the wife whom he had so basely deserted.

His was a warped nature; he was a man who would stoop to crime to hide a fault, and then regarded himself as a badly-used creature because society would not permit him to have his own sweet way.

He was one of those who do not trouble to keep in the right path, or to make a fight against ordinary difficulties, but who consider

that they are the sport of Fate, and try to take a sullen revenge by doing wrong, and sinking more and more deeply into the mire of evil.

"He is to write with it for two hours," he muttered, as he walked along the dusty road in the gathering darkness. "Perhaps he may do it to-day; he must have had it this morning, and it flatters a man to think that his name will be in print in the middle of a big newspaper advertisement as the writer of a testimonial!

"I shall gloat over the destruction of the man, and the wreck of——. No, it won't do much damage to the house, but it will spoil the look of him, and the room he writes in!"

He came within easy distance of the Manor, but he saw no signs of the accomplishment of his fell purpose. He remained near the Manor till ten o'clock, then he felt compelled to return to the inn and retire to his room in order not to arouse suspicion.

"Perhaps I shall find that it has taken place when I get up!" he reflected. He sat at the window for a long time, but finally retired, and fell asleep.

In the morning he waited eagerly for news of the terrible affair; he pictured, with joy, the excitement of the inhabitants and the awe with which they would tell what had happened. He was disappointed; everything was dull and quiet.

"Perhaps it will go off to-day!" he thought, prefacing that reflection by a few choice words that would not look well in print.

That day passed without incident; he hung about the Manor in the vain hope of hearing the report that would tell of the consummation of his plot, but he was doomed to disappointment once more.

The following day gave no better news, and, towards evening, tired of waiting, he resolved to creep quite close to the study, where Poynter spent his leisure, and try to ascertain if he really had the pen.

"It couldn't have gone wrong!" he thought. "The ink flowed well, and as soon as the fluid was half-way down, it would start the tiny mechanism, and the explosive would go off. Just strong enough to kill him, and do mischief to the immediate surroundings. Perhaps he didn't like the feel of it. It was a bit more bulky than the ordinary pens, but not too bulky."

He skirted the place, and selected a spot where it would not be difficult to get into the private grounds and so approach the study. If the pen were not being used, he would do something to cause the ink to leak out, and thus bring about the desired explosion. It might occur when Poynter was near it.

He found it tolerably easy to accomplish his object, and was soon ensconced in the shrubbery at a point that afforded a good view of the private room. It was empty, apparently, for he could see no one.

He had not waited long before he saw his so-called supplanter appear and seat himself at the table. He took up something and gazed at it curiously; then he bent over the table and began to write.

Clifford Merton's heart bounded with exultation. He gloated over the spectacle of what might happen at any moment, but to his disgust he saw Fred Poynter rise and leave the room. Two minutes later, Poynter re-appeared, leading a little girl by the hand.

"Lily!" gasped the watcher.

The sight of his child touched him as nothing had ever done before. It struck a chord that had not been touched for a long time, and he felt changed. Then his wife came in, the woman whom he had basely abandoned.

His better feeling, already agitated by the sight of his little daughter, was still further acted on by this scene. They seemed happy; he heard the child's laughter, and he could see the amused expression of his wife's face; they did not want him, he had deserted them, and they were happy without him.

For a few seconds he was half inclined to slink away and let them think that he was dead. He began to edge himself out of the shrubbery, away from the pleasant scene, but another thought came to him and hardened him once more.

It was Poynter who was making them happy, and he was doing it with money that should have been his, Merton's. If they thought him dead they would marry!

Poynter could easily exert influence over Elsie to induce her to consent, even if she were unwilling; for, as he provided her and her child with their living, he could urge with force any proposal of marriage which he might feel disposed to advance.

"No! I'll kill him!" he muttered savagely, going back to his first position. "I don't care what happens!"

He strained his eyes to see what they were doing; Lily was doing something on the table. She was seated on Poynter's knee. Through the open French window there came to the watcher the sound of Poynter's voice, and the words he caught were—

"The ink—running out! I—won—offer!"

Mercy! The ink was running out, and the innocent child was writing with the fatal pen! A shudder passed through his frame; he uttered a low cry of agony and broke through the shrubs.

Across the small grass plot he ran, and through the open window. The occupants of the study looked up in surprise, his altered appearance and his beard preventing them from recognising him for the time.

"Take it away from her! It will go off!" he shrieked.

He had caught the sound which he knew the pen would give forth when the mechanism began to work. He reached over the table from the back and dragged the dreadful thing roughly from the astonished child's grasp.

He sprang through the open window, and out on the grass plot he essayed to throw it from him. As it left his hand there was an explosion, the windows were shattered by the concussion, and a thick smoke obscured him from the view of the startled persons in the study.

Clifford Merton was badly injured. He was conveyed to a bedroom in the Manor, where he was recognised, confessing his misdeed, and begging that his identity should remain a secret.

"It will soon be all over with me," he moaned, "and I deserved it. I have brought enough misery on my family already, and I wish to spare them from the further scorn of the public."

As a matter of fact, Clifford Merton was recognised by the doctor, but he was regarded as a man who had retrieved his past rather than as a miscreant, and it came about thus—

An explanation of the affair had to be given, so Poynter said that the pen had been sent to him, and he had been saved from destruction by Merton, who had evidently learnt what had been done. Merton was too badly hurt himself to be able to give details. It was a mysterious affair altogether.

Merton was never able to give details. Poynter's conscience pricked him, and he allowed this version to remain for Elsie's sake.

It was three years before Fred Poynter asked Elsie to marry him, and she accepted. The money obstacle was overcome in a peculiar manner. Old Gorham's will decided that Poynter was not to part with any of the money to Merton or his family.

By his marriage Poynter did not actually part with any money in the sense of the will, he had no trouble in that respect, but his anxiety was for her maintenance in the event of his death. The birth of a son settled this difficulty also, for he could make a will and leave all to his own children, appointing Elsie trustee.

"The interest on the money will keep our son, and you, and Lil," he explained, "and you can, as trustee, use it as you like. When he grows up our boy will provide for you, if I am gone."

And in that way he evaded the injustice of the dead hand.

"I don't feel any compunction about it," said Poynter. "Gorham wanted to make me happy, therefore, he would want to make my wife happy! So I am certain he would not object if he were still alive!"

G. Merriam.

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Complete in Twelve Lists.

BRAND NEW COMPETITION.

Cash Down. *Cash Down.* *Cash Down.*

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

And 25 Gramophones.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference. No name of a Railway Station may be composed of a single letter, either standing by itself or taken from any word in the sentences.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. A seventh list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

←CUT THROUGH HERE→

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

SIXTH LIST.

31. She wore sequins on her dress, and a belt of blue stones; their brilliant effect was praised by everyone.

32. What is your saddle worth? It looks expensive, the leather being embossed on both sides.

33. Of all the visitors at the Grange, Conrad Clifworth was most liked. His manners were so refined on every occasion.

34. It was a bigger legacy than Lydia expected as she had lived in more or less seclusion for so long.

35. Up to a certain point pleasant thoughts held sway, then disturbing ones rose, effectually driving them away.

36. The day the baby was born ended with a hailstorm, the worst Edward Housecroft ever remembered, and he was an old man.

NAME..... ADDRESS .....

.....

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Miss Smith, of Melbourne.

How an Heiress Found Her True Lover.

A pretty girl struggling with the refractory handle of the door of a railway carriage—who could fail to come to her assistance? A charming blush and a smile accompanying the words of thanks, the train about to start and who could resist the temptation to jump into the carriage after her?

Certainly Sydney Paget was not stoic enough to pass on to the next carriage when he could sit opposite such a dainty little lady as his eyes rested on when, with a shriek and a start, the train slowly dragged its long length out of the London terminus.

Given youth, good looks, and the stimulus of a glorious day in late Spring and the bridge need be but slight which passes from silence to the ordinary small talk of every-day conversation.

From the label on her handbag, Sydney gathered that the lady's name was Miss Smith, and that she was passenger to Crawley, the small village which was also his destination, therefore it was with a feeling of pleasure that he assured himself he would see more of Miss Smith in the future.

Her rose-leaf complexion, her brilliant hazel eyes and crisp, wavy brown hair, with ever such a slight tinge of red in it, and her bright, impulsive manner made such a charming personality that the young man never noticed that her clothes were not of the newest fashion and her gloves of a cheap make; details that a woman would have seen with half an eye.

Having intimated to her that he was also going to Crawley, and, in fact, had lived there the better part of his life, they embarked on the subject of the beauties of the village, and she showed herself particularly anxious to hear about the inhabitants of the houses round the neighbourhood.

He gave her a lively description of the various oddities of the country magnates in those parts, and at length she said somewhat timidly:

"Do you know any people called Paget there?"

"Living at a place called the Hurst? Why certainly, there is the Hon. Mrs. Paget, her daughter Edith, and two sons. Do you know them?"

"Well, not exactly," she replied in an embarrassed manner. "I—er—know of them; they are, I may say, sort of connections of mine."

Sydney started, and then exclaimed:

"Why, of course, how stupid I am—you are the Miss Smith we have been expecting. How is it I did not guess at once? But you must have come by an earlier steamer than we thought, for we did not think you would be here for another fortnight. How glad I am that I met you."

"But—but," she stammered, "if you expected me may I ask who *you* are?"

"Why, of course—I am Sydney Paget; John must have told you about me—I am his eldest brother. What a pity he is not at home just now. Never mind, you need not feel strange with us. You will find the mater an awfully good sort, and so is sister Edith if she takes to you. And she must do that," he added, *sotto voce*.

Seeing that Miss Smith appeared somewhat ill at ease, Sydney rattled on at some length, asking about her voyage and Australia and quoting largely from his brother John's accounts of the country.

In a short time the young lady's embarrassment passed, and she was soon chatting away, her eyes dancing with suppressed fun; and Sydney was so taken up with watching those said eyes that he never noticed how much he was telling her of himself and his family.

The journey, all too short as it appeared to one at least of the passengers, drew to an end, and soon Sydney had the pleasure of handing his charming fellow-passenger into his own dog-cart and driving off with her at a good pace, pointing out the places of beauty and interest to her as they proceeded.

Arriving at the Hurst he helped her down and conducted her to the drawing-room, where they met a dignified-looking old lady and a daughter, evidently the eldest of the family, pleasant but not good-looking, and dressed with a style that was evidently something beyond the "Modes" of the Crawley dressmaker.

"Mother, just fancy!" cried Sydney, as he ushered Miss Smith into the room. "I came down in the same carriage with Miss Smith and did not guess who she was until she opened my eyes by inquiring about us all."

A look of surprise and pleasure came into the Hon. Mrs. Paget's face as she gazed on the sweet, embarrassed face before her, and kissing her in a warm-hearted manner, she exclaimed:

"I am glad to meet you. I hope you will grow fond of us. Edith, dear," turning to her daughter, "here is Miss Smith."

Edith came forward and shook hands, murmuring expressions of pleasure.

"Of course, my dear," said Mrs. Paget, "you are prepared to stay some time with us before you go off to your friends in Liverpool. A room shall be prepared for you at once. If we had known the exact date of your arrival everything would have been ready."

"Dear Mrs. Paget," replied Miss Smith, with one of her charming blushes, "you are too kind. I am sure I shall be most happy here."

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Having had tea, Edith escorted the visitor to the room prepared for her, and then with suppressed excitement she sought her mother.

"Oh, mother, I am so glad, aren't you? I was so afraid she would be hardly presentable, and really there is no doubt she is quite a lady; and though her dress is out of date, it will pass muster down here."

"Indeed, yes, my dear. I feel we are fortunate, for I never knew who John might have got hold of out in Australia. What fault can he find with her? I wonder why he is so anxious we should not think there is any engagement between them?"

"The whole thing is a mystery to me. Of course we may find out that on further acquaintance she is not what she appears to be at first, but we shall have excellent opportunities for judging while she is here. What a good thing it is that Nellie Seymour has asked to have her visit postponed. Supposing things should not turn out all right it would be so much more disagreeable to have a stranger in the house, and it might set her against us, and then Sydney——"

"What are you saying about Sydney?" said that same person, entering the room.

"Only that you should save some of the little attentions you paid Miss Smith for Nellie Seymour when she comes next month."

"Bother Nellie Seymour! You talk of her morning, noon, and night till I am sick of her name," he burst out, striding about the room in an irate manner.

"My dear boy," broke in Mrs. Paget, "you should not speak in that way of a young lady."

"Especially one with the whole of Samuel Grubham's fortune," he interpolated bitterly. "Mother, I like this business less and less. I know quite well why you have asked her here, and everyone knows it. You want me to marry her, and you would never have thought of it had not old Grubham left her all that money."

"Now, Sydney, you should not speak like that. Of course I should not urge you to marry anyone who was not nice, but I have been assured that Nellie is a most estimable girl, and really worked hard at her profession as a nurse until she suddenly found herself rich.

"As to asking her here, she is a third cousin on your father's side, and we are quite justified in inviting her to spend a few weeks with us. Of course as the eldest son with this place to keep up you cannot marry someone with no money at all, like Miss Smith, for instance," fixing him severely with her double eyeglass.

"'You need not marry for money, but go where money is,'" quoted Edith, seeing a frown gathering on her brother's forehead.

"The man who marries Miss Smith will be a jolly lucky fellow!" he retorted, and left the room wrathfully.

Mother and sister gazed at one another ruefully.

"How very unfortunate that John should be away and Sydney at home just at this juncture," sighed the mother.

"Yes, it is almost a pity she is so pretty," agreed the sister. "But surely she must be engaged to John or she would never have come to pay us a visit, and in that case there would be no fear for Sydney. He is not a cad and she does not look like an adventuress."

The conversation was cut short by the appearance of the young lady in question, and very charming she looked in a pretty black evening dress which had evidently done duty for a long time, but which nevertheless set off the radiant freshness of her bright young face.

"You deny that you are Bessie Smith?"
"I do. I am *not* Bessie Smith."

Mrs. Paget looked at her critically, and decided that though she was all that could be desired as a bride for John yet Sydney must be mated with more money.

John had always been the black sheep of the family, and they had rather dreaded lest he should present them some day with an altogether undesirable Mrs. John.

The voyage to Australia which they hoped would steady him seemed only to have resulted in a sort of semi-engagement with a certain "Miss Smith of Melbourne," an engagement which he strenuously denied at first, but had lately been obliged to partly confess, by owning to some sort of flirtation, when he announced that Miss Smith was coming over to stay with friends in Liverpool, and had proclaimed her wish to pay them a visit.

Seeing that she was far prettier and more ladylike than they had expected, Mrs. Paget determined to have the engagement formally acknowledged, and so make John "settle down." A consummation devoutly wished by his worried mother and sister.

Accordingly they set themselves to be as pleasant as only two thoroughly well-bred English ladies, with a sufficiency of means, can make themselves, and plainly showed by their manner that they were quite ready to accept her as one of the family as soon as she and John chose to declare themselves.

At the end of a week the intimacy had proceeded so far that it was "Bessie" and "Edith" between the two girls, and yet never a word had been let fall to clear up the vexed question as to "engagement" or "no engagement."

Unfortunately, in spite of repeated letters to John, that worthy still found excuses for delaying his home-coming, and even a judicious epistle from Edith hinting that if he post-

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poned his return much longer he might find others not so blind to Miss Smith's charms, and he might lose her altogether, only drew from him a frown as he read it, and the remark:

"So much the better. Anyone is welcome to her who likes to take her."

Sydney thought the week the shortest he had ever passed. In the absence of his brother he found it his duty to devote himself to Miss Smith, and the prospect of her being one day his sister put them at once on the most charming terms of intimacy which at the same time were perfectly safe, as he repeatedly assured himself.

Nevertheless, when at last, in reply to a long letter from his mother concerning Miss Smith, John suddenly announced his return home, Sydney felt an unaccountable dislike to the idea. This dislike, in fact, amounted to a decided repugnance and plunged him into low spirits, and, it must be confessed, a bad temper.

In troubled surprise Mrs. and Miss Paget had watched the development of this unforeseen complication, and feeling that it was no good saying anything to the chief persons concerned, contented themselves with comments to one another.

"Who would have thought that a girl who liked a man well enough to come from the other side of the globe to him (on very slight encouragement) would have shown herself so easily consoled for his absence?"

There was no denying that bright and happy as Bessie Smith generally appeared to be, there were times when a look of anxiety came over her charming countenance and her manner was sometimes embarrassed and unhappy.

"Thank goodness," sighed the Hon. Mrs. Paget to her daughter. "John comes to-morrow, and that will put everything in its proper place. It is most unfortunate that anything should happen to put absurd ideas into Sydney's head just before Nellie Seymour comes."

"I never should have thought," answered Edith, "that she would have flirted so outrageously with one brother while engaged to another."

"But are they engaged?" queried the mother anxiously.

"When John comes we shall know," replied Edith with conviction.

But when John came they found they knew no more than before. The two greeted each other quietly without undue pleasure apparent in their faces.

Disappointed in an immediate solution of their difficulties, the two ladies still found satisfaction in the fact that John had shown himself during the evening more attentive than they would have hoped, and that though Bessie received his attentions timidly, yet she certainly kept Sydney more at a distance than hitherto.

Two days passed, and on the second evening Edith discovered John and Bessie in earnest conversation in the conservatory, and discreetly vanished, not before, however, she heard John say,

"Of course, since you know you are engaged to me——"

Perhaps, however, she would have been less elated had she heard the rest of the conversation.

"Engaged! And to you" repeated Miss Smith hotly. "That is not true; how dare you say such a thing?"

John flushed at the indignant contempt in her voice, and therefore determined to force her to a humiliating confession by pretending to really take her for Bessie Smith.

"Have you forgotten that we met only last year at Melbourne? Do you remember that picnic?"

"Melbourne! I have never been out of England in my life."

"You deny that you are Bessie Smith? You deny that we were engaged shortly before I sailed for home? You deny that you have written to me by every packet since then? That you have come over now to be introduced to my people prior to our marriage?"

"I deny that I ever was, or ever will be engaged to you," replied Bessie, with flashing eyes and a little stamp of her foot. "Not if you were the only man in the world."

John winced, and then said with emphasis,

"You deny that you are Bessie Smith?"

For an instant the bright eyes sank daunted, and then with a proud raising of her head which defied him to think his worst of her, she replied:

"I am not Bessie Smith."

With a sarcastic smile John said, pursuing his advantage to the utmost—

"Then whom have I the honour of addressing? Who is it that is masquerading here under an assumed name, tricking my relations and deceiving the neighbourhood?"

The young girl's anger had faded, and she stood a picture of embarrassment and shame. Even John's insolent words would now draw no flush from her.

Hanging her head, she said in a small voice:

"I am Nellie Seymour."

John could not prevent a start of glad surprise, but he would not give up the advantage her position gave him.

"And why do I find the heiress, Miss Seymour, pretending to be Bessie Smith, and my *fiancée*?"

This gave her the necessary fillip, and her old spirit broke out, and with a proud toss of her head, she replied:

"Miss Smith is a common enough name; could I help it that your family took me for someone else? Had I known that it entailed any connection with you, it is the last name I would have chosen."

John was very wrath, but she looked so pretty and desirable in her anger, especially since he learnt her real identity, that he controlled himself with a great effort, and sought to turn it all to his advantage.

"Miss Seymour," he said gravely, "I fear you will find yourself in a very awkward position unless you let me help you. Can you not explain to me what caused you to act in this extraordinary manner?"

Nellie blushed, and then said—

"Well, I suppose I may as well tell you all about it. Two months ago I was Nellie Seymour, now I am Miss Seymour, the heiress. I cannot say the change was unwelcome, it certainly was unexpected.

"I had nursed Mr. Grubham because I was paid to do so, and had no idea he would leave me his money. The surprising thing to me was to find then what a lot of unexpected friends and relations I possessed, and how fond they all were of me.

"Amongst other invitations, I received one from the Hon. Mrs. Paget, urging our kinship most kindly, and begging me to come and stay for a month.

"A kind friend to whom I spoke of this said it was the talk of the village that I was being asked down for the——" here she stammered, and a charming blush covered her face—"for the eldest son to marry. In some indignation I decided to come here as a stranger and judge of the family for myself.

"Accordingly I took the name of Miss Smith and came. On my way I met your brother, and he mistook me for the Miss Smith your people were expecting. This was too good a chance of making the acquaintance of the family, so acting on a momentary impulse, I fell in with his idea, and was introduced to his mother and sister.

"By degrees I learnt more about the person I was representing, but though I was somewhat troubled at their frequent allusion to 'John,' I give you my word I had no idea until now

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that I was personating someone so near and dear to you. I fear that you must have been bitterly disappointed when you saw me," she said, with a mischievous glance, which fired John's blood.

He took a step towards her.

"By Heavens! The disappointment is now! Remain my *fiancée*, and I ask nothing more of Fate."

"And what would you do with two?" she said.

He recovered himself with a frown.

"Oh, I am not really engaged to Bessie Smith. She is only coming over to see her friends in Liverpool."

"And the picnic? And her letters?" Nellie was triumphant now.

"That was nothing," he stammered. "Miss Seymour—Nellie, if you will only listen to me, if you will only let tell me you how I love you."

"Enough, Mr. Paget," she said with dignity. "I wish to hear no more. After what you have said, I am sure you are not free to speak so to anyone but Miss Smith."

"And if I were?" he added eagerly.

"If you were, it would make no difference," she answered firmly.

John strode about for a few minutes with a black cloud on his face, and then said:

"What do you propose doing now?"

"I do not know," she announced. "I suppose I had better confess the whole thing to your mother, and beg her forgiveness."

"I think it would be better," he replied slowly, "if you let things remain as they are for a time, and then you can terminate your visit here and return to town. When you come again as Miss Seymour, you will find it easier to confess and be forgiven."

Nellie needed some persuasion to agree to this plan of further deception, but she was naturally averse to proclaiming her mistake and eating humble pie, and John had strong reasons for postponing the explanation, and so in the end he prevailed.

Sydney noticed with a pang that there seemed to be some private understanding between his brother and Miss Smith that evening, but at the same time he saw that she was evidently unhappy and ill at ease, and the timid, supplicating look he saw once in her eyes aroused in him a mad desire to punch John's head and carry her off.

For some few days things remained in the same strained condition, and then John received a letter which seemed greatly to perturb him.

"By-the-bye," he read, "the *Orinoco* came in yesterday, and my friend Tomson was on board. He tells me there was a Miss Smith there who has been most particular in her inquiries about Crawley, and especially about you, and spoke of running down on Friday."

"Hang her!" he ejaculated. "I wish she had gone to the bottom. If I only had time I am sure I could get Nellie. I am sure she likes me better than she did. But, by Heaven! that dreadful girl will be here to-morrow, and what can I do?"

"I cannot face her, that is true. If only I had time to get Nellie to promise herself to me! I could have got her to buy off Bessie to avoid a scandal. Now there is nothing for it but to run. I shall have one try for her, however. Faint heart never won fair lady." And he went to meet Nellie in the garden.

It was a glorious day, and Nellie, in her white frock, as she stood among the clumps of gorgeous rhododendrons, for which the Hurst was famed, looked a winsome enough little lady without the golden halo that surrounded her in John's eyes since he knew she was the rich heiress.

"Proofs! Here they are," and she banged down a packet of letters in John's handwriting.

With an assumption of authority which made Sydney's blood boil, John sent him about his business and took Nellie for a stroll.

Seeing she was ill-at-ease and likely to defy him if he strained the cord too tightly, John plunged at once into the subject.

"Miss Seymour"—suddenly taking her hand—"I love you. Do you not care a little for me? Will you not let this pretended engagement become a reality?"

Nellie withdrew her hand.

"I am sorry to cause you pain, Mr. Paget, but I have already told you this thing can never be, I do not love you and never shall. Will you please leave me?"

John grew white. He was very much in earnest, to win her meant so much to him, a pretty wife, plenty of money, a freedom from the fear that Bessie Smith would get him after all.

"You are breaking my heart; do you not care that you have spoilt my life?"

"It is not right of you to speak like this," she replied. "If your life is spoilt it is your own fault. I told you from the first that I could never love you and *never shall*."

There was no mistaking her sincerity, but he tried his last cast.

"If you will not accept the love I offer you, will you accept my name, will you marry me to save your good name?"

Here Nellie turned on him, her slight form drawn to its utmost, and in her eyes an expression of offended purity, of outraged womanhood, which effectually quelled him.

"Nothing can be said against my good name. I do not

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need to shelter it behind a dishonoured shield of a breaker of vows, and a bully."

Without another word she turned and left him.

In a fury he cried as she went:

"You will be sorry for this to-morrow."

That evening important business took John to town, and Edith and Mrs. Paget were once more in dire perplexity as to the course their curious case of "true love" was running.

Nellie's spirits rose high, she felt the relief of John's absence, and she gave herself up to the pleasure of being alone with Sydney once more.

At times John's threat returned to her mind, but she paid little heed to it. To-night she would enjoy herself, to-morrow she would announce the termination of her visit, and then either write and explain, or come back in her true character and beg forgiveness.

Poor Sydney was divided between rapture and a horrible feeling that, after all, the girl, whom he now found he had grown to love so dearly, was not quite acting as she should. Surely if it had been anyone else he would have said she was flirting with him, and encouraging him to love her, and that such conduct in one who was pledged to another was most reprehensible. He paced his room for many hours that night, and his conclusion was:

"Mother may have been mistaken and so may Edith; John may be telling lies, but I will stake my life that she is a noble-minded and pure girl, whose white soul has never been sullied by an unworthy thought or wish." Which shows that he had done more than stake his life on his belief, he had put all his chance of happiness on one throw.

The morrow came and even as Nellie was turning over in her mind the exact words in which to take leave of her hostess, a thunder-bolt fell in their midst. The man-servant announced in a loud tone:

"A young lady wishes to see the Hon. Mrs. Paget on urgent business. She says her name is Miss Bessie Smith of Melbourne, and that she is expected."

Mrs. Paget and Edith literally gasped and glanced at Nellie, who stood looking the picture of guilt.

Mrs. Paget was the first to recover herself.

"There must be some mistake, I think. Please show the lady up, James."

"An interval of silence, in which the three ladies avoided one another's eyes, and then entered Miss Smith of Melbourne. A rather over-dressed female, no longer very young, of a tawdry kind of good looks, and with an Australian twang, that might be recognised at any distance.

"I suppose you are Mrs. Paget and you Edith Paget?" she remarked.

The ladies bowed and wondered what would fellow.

"Well, I'm Bessie Smith. I've come all the way from Australia to see that your son John does right by me."

Mrs. Paget came forward and said in an icy tone:

"I fear there must be some mistake. This young lady"—pointing to Nellie, who stood uncertain what to do or say—"is Miss Smith, and has been staying with us for some time."

The real Miss Smith stared at Nellie in undisguised astonishment and then with blunt coarseness remarked:

"Well, all I can say is, that if she has been staying here as Miss Bessie Smith of Melbourne and engaged to Mr. John Paget, you had better count your spoons, for she is a rank impostor."

Mrs. Paget trembled and cast a glance at Nellie, who, however, had guilt written on her countenance, and she murmured—

"We have only your word for it. Where are your proofs?"

"Proofs! Plenty of them. There!" And she banged down a packet of letters in John's handwriting. "There!" And she produced a ring which Mrs. Paget knew well as one she had given John when he came of age.

Edith went forward to Nellie.

"Bessie! Deny all this. Say you are really Bessie Smith, and this woman the impostor."

But poor Nellie could only say:

"She says truly, I am not Bessie Smith."

"Then who are you? Why have you deceived us? Are you engaged to John?" And a hundred other questions were showered on Nellie as she stood bewildered, and this was the scene to which Sydney entered and stood gazing at speechless.

"Sydney!" said his mother, "in dignified wrath, "we have been grossly deceived. This person is not Miss Smith. She is some impostor."

Only one idea, however, occurred to Sydney.

"Not Miss Smith?" he exclaimed, turning a radiant face to Nellie. "Then you are not engaged to John?"

"No," she replied, and then the room was empty, and held only the two, as for a long moment they gazed in one another's eyes and read the truth.

Then Sydney drew her hand through his arm, and, turning to his mother, said:

"Whoever she may be, I love her, and if she will accept me I shall deem myself the most fortunate man on earth."

"Sydney!" exclaimed Edith. "Are you mad?"

"This is preposterous," cried Mrs. Paget, "I insist on an explanation."

"Yes," said Miss Smith, whose triumphant smile at the confession of the impostor had changed to a look of consternation at the foregoing scene.

"You had better prove yourself respectable or the police must be called in."

Nellie ignored this remark, and turning to Mrs. Paget said:

"Forgive me—I am Nellie Seymour."

"Nellie Seymour!" the two ladies gasped in unison.

"Why? Why? Whatever made you call yourself Bessie Smith?"

And then Nellie explained the whole history of how she found she was being taken for some unknown person, and how, thinking no harm, she continued the deception until it grew more and more difficult to get herself out of the tangle, and then turning to Sydney, the sparkle of her dancing eyes veiled in tender tears, she said:

"At any rate, I have learnt the worth of one noble heart, and have no fear but that I am loved for myself. Ah, Mrs Paget!" Impulsively throwing her arms round her. "Do forgive me. I shall be your daughter-in-law after all, if you will have me."

And what could Mrs. Paget do (realising that after all her wish was fulfilled), than kiss her and forgive her.

Meanwhile, Miss Smith was clamouring to be told of John's whereabouts. No one could enlighten her. After some trouble she was persuaded to depart, and the family was left to make their mutual explanations. In time they grew to look on it as a joke, and almost to believe that they had seen through it all the time.

The village was somewhat puzzled to find that it was the eldest and not the youngest Mr. Paget who was to marry the lady from Australia, and that the lady was not from Australia after all, but was the wealthy Miss Seymour. However, the wonder was soon talked out and ceased to interest.

Nellie made private arrangements with her lawyers by which Miss Smith was bought off and persuaded to return to Australia. She said it was to make up to John for disappointing him.

L. Hughes.

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THE OLD ROOM.

Telling of the Winning Back of a Husband's Love.

"My dearest Alice! In two years I will come back to the old town and claim you! The change of fortune has come at last, and I feel that this is but the first step towards success. In two years I shall be in a position to give you a home, I am sure of it! I shall not wait for the great success which I feel now is bound to come; I will have you with me, to share the increasing good fortune, for you have helped me immeasurably in the winning of it!"

He clasped her to his breast and she nestled against his stronger frame with a happy smile on her face.

"I knew it would come, Will, if you only kept on trying!" she replied simply. "I knew that if you held out till you got the first opening, you would rise rapidly!"

His face clouded for a moment at the recollection of the disappointments of the past.

He had always been fond of drawing and sketching. Someone had told him that he ought to cultivate the gift and he would become a great artist; he was of a very impressionable nature, one of those who are either deeply despondent or exceedingly hopeful and pass from one condition to the other in rapid succession, and his ambition was fired.

He had set to work to study, so far as his means would permit, but, as his parents were dead and he had to support himself, a mere lad, by his own earnings, his means did not give him the scope he wanted.

He had pursued his studies with more or less assiduity, according to circumstances, till he had attained his twentieth year and had acquired skill with the pencil and the brush; then he had endeavoured to obtain work in the metropolis as a black-and-white artist by sending sketches to editors.

His idea was to obtain employment in that way and devote his spare time and all the money he could scrape together to the pursuit of his studies at some school or under some artist.

Ill-luck seems to dog the steps of some people at the outset of their careers—very often for their ultimate benefit, although it may not appear so—and Will Darrell was one of those. His was not the nature to be strong in adversity and to be roused by it to greater effort; he wanted help in this direction.

His sketches were returned on all sides, and at the end of two months—having worked with great ardour and not having taken into account the possibility of rebuffs—he was disheartened and ready to give up the attempt and develop into that unpleasant specimen of humanity—a disappointed man.

It was at that moment that the needed help came to him in the form of a sympathetic soul, a woman of inherent goodness and a firm believer in the final triumph of those who do their utmost.

It was not exactly a common-place meeting, yet it was not an extraordinary one.

As Will was walking along the somewhat crowded pavement, one wet evening, he saw a drunken fellow trip over a paving stone that had not been properly laid; the man stumbled heavily against a girl, Alice Holmes, and sent her staggering into the road in front of a trap that was coming along at a rattling pace.

Will was nearest and he luckily had sufficient presence of mind to act promptly. In a trice he had the girl on the pavement just in time.

It was natural, after that, for the two to strike up an acquaintance, which deepened into friendship, and then into love. Alice learnt of Will's hopes and discouragements, and she consoled him and inspired him with courage to persevere.

Will Darrell's brow cleared and he pressed this girl closer to his heart as he remembered how she had encouraged him. Some fatality appeared to attend all his efforts.

Perhaps he did not try in the right direction for success; whatever the explanation, he failed every time and he would have discontinued his attempts, and his studies also, and probably have drifted into a good-for-nothing had it not been for the patience and the confidence of Alice Holmes.

She would tell him that he must succeed in the end, and that his failures should have the effect of making him more assiduous in his studies.

"Once get an opening, and you will go on!" she declared. "If you try and fail, you will feel better than if you do nothing, and you will certainly not be worse off!" That was commonsense, but it was not easy for Darrell to follow the advice.

So Alice helped him; she insisted on his taking some of the money which she contrived to save from her own small wage, so that he might have enough to carry out his object. She urged that he ought not to refuse; they were to be partners in the future, and this was capital invested for their mutual benefit.

And at last the chance did come, as Alice prophesied it would, and in a short time it led to the offer of a subordinate position on the staff of a large publishing firm, and Will Darrell was leaving his native place to take up his new duties.

Will Darrell did not feel the parting so keenly as did Alice; he was so full of the future that he had small space left in heart or mind for grief at what was actually taking place.

With Alice it was different; she was to be left alone, to lose the presence of the man she had learnt to love with all the fervour of which so true a nature was capable.

The old place would be dark and dull without him, but she assumed a cheerful expression and prepared to submit to the inevitable for a time. Perhaps it would not be tw

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years; she hoped that it would not be so long, for Will's sake as well as her own.

The next two years were very happy ones for Will Darrell; he was well-nigh intoxicated with success. Dame Fortune tried to atone for her former somewhat shabby treatment by lavishing her favours upon him.

There was no need for words of encouragement from Alice; her letters, on the contrary, contained gently-worded admonitions not to allow his triumphs to overwhelm him. Her letters reached him with unfailing regularity on the same day every week, but his weekly epistles to her were not sent so regularly after a time. He was always very penitent, but he had so much to do!

It was nearly three years before he asked her to come to him; he had waited till he had set up a studio of his own and was gaining some celebrity as an artist in oils. His progress had been phenomenal; his every desire appeared to be gratified almost immediately.

Both Will and Alice were overjoyed, and neither—not even Alice with all her insight—suspected that fortune might be more disastrous to happiness than failure.

The wedding was a quiet one; this was the wish of Alice whose modesty shrank from a fashionable display, such as might reasonably have been expected if all Will's new friends and admirers had been informed, and the ceremony had taken place in London.

They were married from the old home and spent a brief honeymoon in the south, returning to the studio in the realm of artists in the metropolis, St. John's Wood.

The happiness to which Alice Darrell had looked forward for so long was now hers. She had a husband of whom she was passionately fond, although her affection was not so demonstrative as that of Will for her; her husband was making a name for himself, realising her prediction and her ardent wish.

Will was in the seventh heaven of delight; life was a pleasure, a thing to hold on to with all one's strength—however could he have said, at one time, that it was not worth living? Life is always worth living if you honestly try to get the best out of it! And, thanks to his dear wife, he had been able to do this!

The joy of living remained with them unimpaired for another year, and then a change came over Will Darrell; much success, with his consequent celebrity, was turning his head. He was the lion of Society; he was invited here and there, and——

Ah! Alice had not been brought up to this kind of thing, and she was not fitted for it by education or training! She was awkward in certain circumstances—*gauche*, the ladies termed her. She was not quick at repartee; she was not a brilliant conversationalist or pianist.

Will Darrell heaved a sigh as he opened a letter in his studio and found that it contained an invitation from Lady Manville Retton.

"I really ought to accept this," he muttered, frowning in his perplexity, "but I don't see how I am to go without Alice—I can't invent any plausible excuse for keeping her at home—yet she is *not* quite—er—what one would expect to see there as"—he blushed involuntarily—"as my wife! Oh, confound it! Why wasn't she—why isn't she more up-to-date in her education and style?"

He frowned again. It was very provoking! Unless he could devise some way out of the difficulty, he would lose a great deal; for he really couldn't take Alice with him to these Society functions, and yet how was he to go without her?

"She would be awfully hurt, the dear girl!" he continued with a trace of compunction, "but it's a fact that she doesn't shine. She is a good wife, and all that sort of thing, but—I am afraid that what I overheard Fraser say (the beggar) is right; she is in my light now!"

He did very little work that afternoon; he was worrying about Alice and how he was to act. His wife always left him to himself in his studio in the afternoon, entering about five o'clock to take tea with him in his den, and staying with him till he ceased work.

If he did not work after tea, they spent a pleasant hour or so together in conversation or in arranging and re-arranging things in this or that room. Pleasant? Well, they had been very agreeable, but Will was changing his ideas.

"I *must* accept it!" he decided. "And Alice must stay at home!"

He didn't mean to be cruel; he persuaded himself that Alice did not care for these functions, and that they were absolutely necessary for his further progress. Therefore, it would, or should, suit both of them for him to go alone.

"I don't think you are looking very well, Alice," he said that evening with some solicitude. "I don't suppose these parties suit you, and you would rather stay at home. So would I, dear, but, you see, it's part of the business! Now, here is an invitation from Lady Manville Retton—sure to meet a lot of good people there. For Thursday. Would you prefer to stay at home? I *must* go."

He puffed a wreath of smoke from a good cigar so that it partly hid his face. Alice did not say anything for a few seconds, but she finally answered cheerfully:

"I should prefer it, Will; but I'll go if you——"

"Oh, not at all!" declared Will, with just a little too much eagerness. "It will not matter in the least if you are not with me! I have had an idea for a week or two that you would rather be at home! We will call it settled at that!"

He felt rather sheepish over it, but he congratulated himself that he had managed the matter cleverly. He went to Lady Manville Retton's reception, alone; and that was the beginning of the disaster.

Led away by flattery and the desire to mount the ladder of Fame in the shortest possible time, Will Darrell's thoughts became more and more absorbed in all that touched his art in any way whatever, and Alice was pushed farther and farther into the background.

He regretted that he could not give parties, but he dreaded the ordeal. Alice became, in his eyes, less and less fitted for the exalted position to which he was raising her.

It never occurred to him that it was she who had enabled him to assume this position—that she had laid the foundation-stone, as it were, by her sympathy, encouragement, and practical help in the dark days of failure. And he belittled her by supposing that Alice was incapable of taking her place by his side.

She was one of Nature's noblewomen, and her small shortcomings, even supposing that she could not smooth them away, would have failed to attract attention when her real character became known and understood.

It did not occur to him that it was his bounden duty to stand up for her. Fame had intoxicated him, it had made him selfish and deprived him of the power of correct reasoning. He drifted apart from his wife and the happy home of her dreams was as unsubstantial as the visions of sleep.

Will Darrell did not work so much now; he could command a price for his pictures which rendered it unnecessary to peg away regularly, and for many hours a day. He was quicker at the work, too.

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It therefore became the rule for him to work by fits and starts, painting all night in order to get a picture finished, because he had not commenced it in time.

The old times were gone ; there were no more happy hours in the studio together and Alice rarely entered it. There was usually an air of neglect about it ; she tried once or twice to clear it up and make it appear as was its wont, but the blinding tears came to her eyes and she had to beat a hasty retreat.

What was to happen ? Will Darrell was away from home for a longer time than he was in it. He seemed to have lost affection for her and paid her but scant attention.

It was heart-breaking for Alice. Her hidden grief was wearing her away. She sometimes blamed herself, saying that she had not done enough to keep him by her side ; then she would remember how she had tried to comfort him, taking an interest in all he was doing, honestly praising his work and devoting herself to him. What more could she have done ?

"I know I was backward," she would sob, "but I was learning, and he did not give me a chance."

One night she heard him mutter something in his sleep ; it was to the effect that he had made a mistake in marrying. It nearly broke her heart, but in the end it roused her to make one grand attempt to bring him back to his old love.

No, she would not organise a reception and act the grand lady ! Will was blinded ; she would restore sight, and hope, hope and pray, that he would become his old self once more.

Will Darrell had sent in three pictures for the Royal Academy. Alice dreaded the result, for she was convinced that Will had not done his best ; he had "rushed" them, confident in his power to produce good pictures with a minimum of labour—a fatal mistake for anyone, in any vocation.

He had gone off on a tour to Italy with some of his newly-found friends, and Alice was left behind to grieve and scheme for the restoration of the happiness which success had shattered.

The rejection of all three pictures followed within a fortnight of Will Darrell's departure—a terrible blow to his reputation and pride. Alice did not send the news to him ; she knew that he would learn of this disaster from others. She wrote to him to urge him to come home, as she wanted him, and she prepared for his homecoming.

There was a room next to the studio, a small room which had often reminded them both of the little parlour in her aunt's house in the old town ; they had spent some happy hours in that parlour during Will's struggle for recognition, and the room next the studio often recalled those days to her. Often did she press her hand to her heart now as the recollection came to her on entering this off-room.

She was busy with that room. A cart had come to the house with some old furniture, a second-rate lot that would have made the artistic neighbours stare had they seen it ; but it was packed and they saw cases of something delivered by a Great Northern Railway van. Alice and her servant worked with feverish haste in order to conclude the preparations by the time Will returned. He had written a brief note to Alice, telling her that he would be home on Saturday, and he arrived punctually at the stated time.

He looked dejected and forlorn, and it aggravated his feeling of irritation and annoyance that his wife was not in the hall to meet him and extend to him the sympathy which she had ever given him. Yet, did he deserve it ?

In the midst of his vexation and his silent raving against Fate and luck, he remembered that he had forsaken her and lost all claim to her sympathy.

"She does not care now !" he muttered, mechanically hanging up his hat and light overcoat.

His heart sank as he realised that he had to rebuild a reputation without Alice's help ; he little thought with what anxiety she had waited for his return, for she had half-feared that his dejection might cause him to take some desperate step before she could have the opportunity of bringing him to her side again.

He made straight for the studio and uttered an impatient exclamation on finding it locked. He turned to the next room ; the door yielded to his touch and he entered.

Another exclamation, this time of bewilderment, left his lips and he stepped back in amazement. Where was he ? This room—it was not a room in his house ! He passed his hand over his heated brow, wondering if he had gone mad and had wandered to—to the little town in the north ! What did it mean ?

He stared about him. He was at the door of the old parlour, in which Alice and he had often met in the struggling days. It was the self-same furniture and curtains, the same cheap chiming clock on the mantelpiece. And there, in the old chair and dressed in the old clothes, sat Alice !

"I am glad you have come, Will !" said Alice in the old cheery voice and with that sweet smile on her face. "Sit down and tell me all your worries, dear, while tea is being got ready, and I'll see if I can drive away the imps of mischief that worry and dishearten you !"

Alice uttered the words as nearly as possible in the old strain, but her heart was full of dread lest the hoped-for effect should not be produced.

She had thought that this transportation into old times would arouse Will's better feelings, that it would tear the scales from his eyes and make him see what he had lost—what both had lost—in the abundance of outward good-fortune.

She knew that a strange vision of past scenes, a sudden return to old surroundings and old affections had often worked a marvellous effect in showing people where their happiness really lay, and this was her plan to bring Will to her and to restore to him the happiness that was eluding him.

He stared at her in surprise. She rose and came towards him with outstretched hands. He cast a swift glance round the room and at her, and he realised in a flash the plot of his devoted wife. With a cry of joy, which contained a tinge of remorse, he opened his arms and she willingly—oh, so willingly !—allowed him to fold her in a strong embrace.

"I see it all now, dearest !" he declared, when he could master his emotion. "I have been wrong, very wrong ! Success has spoilt me. This little stage play of yours has done more than anything else could have done to show me where my real good fortune lies, and I shall never again forget that a good wife is better than all else !

"Kiss me, dear, and forgive me ! We are beginning again, but the path will be different and it will have more sunshine upon it, even although the world may not see it !"

F. Brewster.

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Paul Jerome. His friend, a war-correspondent and journalist, in love with Irene.
Dennis Hartigan. A ship's steward, and husband of Hannah.
"Kit" Hartigan. His sister, a blind girl.
Detective-Sergt. Ussher. Of Scotland Yard.

TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

"What are you Going to Do?"

Mr. Ussher rubbed the dimple in his chin with the point of a bent knuckle.

"I—I thought perhaps, sir," he said dubiously, "that you yourself might make a few casual inquiries of her ladyship. Any questions on my part, sir, might so easily impress her ladyship with a sense of—of cross-examination. I should regret that, sir, extremely."

Edward Stormont inclined his head as if to acknowledge the detective's point of view.

"You are exceptionally considerate, Mr. Ussher," he replied, "but really I must decline to act as a deputy in the matter. My sister-in-law can have nothing to conceal. If she went out on the night in question she had adequate reason, if she did not she will tell us so and there's an end of it."

The door had opened as he spoke and the footman stepped through.

"Take my compliments to Lady Tarleton," he desired, "and say that I shall be glad if she can come down for a moment to the library. Add that Mr. Ussher is here."

The servant withdrew. Paul Jerome rose and approached his host.

"I have some letters to write, Stormont," he observed, tactfully; "I believe I will not intrude upon your consultation with Lady Tarleton and Mr. Ussher."

Edward Stormont laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"My dear fellow," he exclaimed, "don't desert me. If you only knew how heartily I detest the law and all that appertains to it, you would not leave me alone to wrestle with Mr. Ussher's official curiosity. However, he is but doing his duty, and we must humour him. I hope my sister-in-law will see his interrogations in the same light."

Mr. Ussher coughed. "I am most wishful, sir," he remarked, "not to appear officious or to exceed in any way the strict letter of my obligations. But, as I say, sir, I am bound to trace, and, if possible, to account for, every action of Hannah Davenal for some while before her murder. Not that I attach any importance to this story."

"Do not disquiet yourself, Mr. Ussher," interrupted the other, "I said 'official curiosity' not 'officious.' You must not do less, and we will even pardon your doing a trifle more than your duty."

He went to the door of the room. It had swung wide again, and Lady Tarleton was entering; he met her and placed a chair for her. She looked at the three men with an air of haughty expectation.

"My dear Adeline," began her brother-in-law, "you must forgive my sending for you instead of asking you to receive me. But Mr. Ussher here is in a more than ordinarily inquisitive mood, and his curiosity can only be satisfied at your hands. He has, it seems, dropped across some person, a gamekeeper, in fact, who is under the impression that a night or two prior to Davenal's death he—the gamekeeper—saw you and her in the park, at the traditionally mysterious hour of twelve o'clock p.m., if not, indeed, later."

Lady Tarleton raised to the detective a countenance on which surprise was stamped. The slightly-parted lips, the widely-opened eyes, the blank expression of the features—all counterfeited amazement to the life.

"My good man," she ejaculated, "you don't mean to say that you have come up to the Tower seriously to investigate

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an absurd story that I—that we—oh!" she broke off, with a harsh little laugh, "how ridiculous you police people can be. What, in Heaven's name, would take me out with Davenal in this wilderness—on foot and at midnight?"

Mr. Ussher cleared his throat.

"I told Mr. Stormont, my lady," he said, "that I attached no importance to the story—in—in one way. But the gamekeeper, my lady, was most precise with regard to the place (the neighbourhood of the mausoleum in the park), the time, and resemblance between Davenal's companion and yourself. And my object in consulting Mr. Stormont was to ascertain how far I should be well advised in treating the suggested resemblance as a clue."

"A clue!" Lady Tarleton was staring at him incredulously; "a clue to what?"

"It—it occurred to me, your ladyship," responded the detective, abashed, "that possibly some confidential mission—having no bearing upon the case, but still of a peculiarly private nature, some errand of mercy, or such-like—might have taken you, my lady, out of doors, even at so late an hour."

He cleared his throat once more—Lady Tarleton's scornful quiet was disconcerting.

"In which event," he pursued, "I should abandon my idea of tracking down this person who might be said to resemble you and who conceivably had held secret communications with Davenal. In addition, my lady, I might be called upon to observe a certain amount of tact in suppressing further and unnecessary references to the cause of your ladyship's excursion."

Lady Tarleton smiled disdainfully. "Really, Mr. Ussher," she said, "you are chivalry and discretion themselves. But your caution in this instance is wasted. Neither an errand of mercy nor any other errand took me out on the night immediately preceding Davenal's death or on the night preceding that. My servants can tell you at what hours I retired if you choose to question them."

Edward Stormont intervened. "I should imagine, Adeline," he commented, "that nothing could be more distant from Mr. Ussher's intentions. It is clear that he has got upon a point in connection with Davenal whose elucidation might throw a light upon her unfortunate death."

His sister-in-law shrugged her shoulders, but Edward Stormont persisted gently.

"Twenty-four hours or so before it," he continued, "she was seen in the park with a companion of about your height and appearance. What happened once may have happened again—she may have met the same person and been stealthily followed back to the Tower by her or by another. This mysterious woman may be, for all we know, the actual murderer. In any case, the clue is not to be neglected."

The detective made a solemn memorandum. "I am much obliged to you, sir," he said, "that is exactly my view of the affair, and I must thank her ladyship for dealing so frankly with the matter. I shall be glad if I may, for the present, consider that the subject of our conversation—the reported midnight meeting of Davenal with some woman—might be kept strictly to ourselves. Reference to it would very probably increase my difficulty in following up the clue which it undoubtedly suggests."

"Quite so," assented Edward Stormont, returning to his desk. "I presume there is nothing else, Mr. Ussher, upon which you wish to consult us?"

Mr. Ussher shook his head. "No, sir, thank you," he replied, yet lingered. "I trust your ladyship," he added, "will acquit me of any thought of discourtesy to herself."

"Certainly," said Lady Tarleton, negligently. "I am glad you feel there is a chance of the clue leading to something. I hope it may."

"I will do my best with it, my lady," answered the detective. He crossed the library to hold wide the door to which she was sweeping, and, with a low bow to Edward Stormont and a less profound inclination to Paul Jerome, stepped out after her, to leave the Tower by the rear entrance as Lady Tarleton ascended the great staircase.

When she had reached the upper landing she paused—to draw breath; she was disposed to corpulency, as the plumpness of her throat and wrists betrayed.

"That man," she said, "is a born blunderer. Yet, for a moment I fancied he was going to blunder into a——" She interrupted herself. "Bah!" she muttered, "he is too big a fool to be dangerous under any circumstances." And, having regained her breath, she pursued her way to the boudoir.

TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

"Do Not Cross my Path Again."

"It is very, very strange."

Moira murmured the words to herself as she stood by the window of the little sleeping chamber which she shared with the blind girl. Near her was a highly-polished "tallboy" chest that occupied almost the whole of one wall of the apartment. An upper drawer of the set was open, she had taken from it the triangular fragment of metal that John Davenal had given to her on what might so easily have been his deathbed.

"If only one of the dates had been left!" she exclaimed abstractedly. "It would have been something. 'Born'—well, I do know my birthday, June the fifth, and I am nineteen when it comes round again. That would make me have been born in 'eighty-four.' But 'Died'—I haven't died—oh, dear, it is puzzling."

She examined the fragment of metal minutely. It had been a square, or possibly an oblong. The longest edge of the triangle was jagged and twisted, as though the plate had been severed by bending. Where the "n" in "Born" approached the torn margin there were portions of other engraved characters—they might have been the top sections of a "J" and a "u." But the "d" in "Died" was itself scarcely complete, and no guess could be hazarded at any detail of the date that presumably followed.

Moira relapsed into thought. Kit's childish experience on the breakwater suggested so much, and yet did not pass beyond suggestion by a hair's breadth. Something had been thrown from the granite pier as the blind girl sat unseen upon the landing-steps below; was it—could it have been something of which the mangled metal had formed part?

But the plate was palpably either a coffin or a memorial plate—was it, then, the former that had been consigned, seventeen years before, to the depths of Groudle Bay?

Moira passed a hand across her forehead, the riddle was as grim as it was profound. And the key to it, if key there were, did not seemingly lie in the possession of John Davenal, for he had spoken of one who "claimed" to be her father, and had added that he would be glad to learn that the claim was false.

Who, then, was the man who made the claim? And how had she been transferred from his care to that of the diver—how and why? Was it possible that the plate did not relate to her but to some kinswoman—whose name she bore—her mother, after whom she might well have been called; the name Moira was not a common one.

She shuddered as Kit's words came back to her—the words that the blind girl had heard. "This is out far enough—in with it." Was the incident a link in some dark and deadly chain, or was it the merest coincidence, singular but misleading?

Commonsense favoured the theory of coincidence. Yet she could not rid herself of the feeling that the broken plate, with its incomplete inscription, was in some fashion connected with her past, her present, her future.

After all, John Davenal had not told her the whole of the secret, even in so far as it was known to him. And to the diver such a connection had not seemed improbable, else why had he preserved the fragment?

Folding the metal in its indorsed white paper wrapping, Moira laid it in the drawer, locked the latter, and turned to the glass. She had been setting in order the upper rooms of the cottage, and her active movements had brought certain loose, fair tresses tumbling over her forehead

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SERIAL STORY.

These restored to their proper position, she set the casement window wide and descended the narrow stairs. Half-way down she halted, checked by a call from the landing. The day-nurse—now the diver's sole professional attendant—was summoning her.

"Miss Davenal," she said, "will you lend me a hand for a moment?"

"Certainly, nurse," answered Moira, and ran back. "What—what is it?" she asked, a trifle anxiously. The nurse laughed at her.

"Nothing serious, dear," she said in a whisper, "only your father insists on having the bureau lifted to his bedside. He wants to read some old letters, he says, and really it is so difficult to keep him contented that he must have his way, seeing that he won't let me get them out for him. But the bureau is rather heavy for me to move alone."

She held up her finger as Moira stepped towards the door of the diver's room.

"Don't talk or stay," she observed, "he is doing famously, but I don't know how it is, the sight of you appears to excite him more than anything else. I did ask him about it, and he said you were all he had in the world, and the thought of being spared to be with you a while longer seemed too wonderful to be true."

Moira's lips trembled.

"He—he loves me very much," she faltered, "more than I deserve."

"Oh, I don't say 'Yes' to that," retorted the nurse, pushing wide the door of her patient's room. "Here is somebody who will help me, Mr. Davenal," she remarked cheerily; "since wilful man must have his way." And she went to an end of the heavy mahogany bureau. Moira, with a gentle glance at the diver, took the other.

John Davenal, propped up among his pillows, smiled wanly.

"I'm giving you a deal of trouble," he said, "and I'm afraid it's an awkward job for womenfolk. Yon old piece was old when I was a boy, and it's fine and solid. But it'll be a convenience to have it near; it'll do for a kind of table. And then I'm—I'm very restless, Moira, and I think I'd like to play at business for a little."

"It must only be play, then," the nurse warned him, as she brought his keys from the mantel. The diver pointed out the right one, and she unlocked the stout flap and drew it down. It projected over the bed. John Davenal regarded its proximity with a sort of contentment.

"That'll do nicely, thank you," he decided, and added wistfully, "won't you let Moira sit with me a bit?"

The nurse shook her head.

"No," she responded, "you will only talk whether she answers back or not. And, besides, you are to have another visitor this morning, Mr. Hartigan."

The diver's brows contracted.

"Aye," he said; "well, you've given me my way in one thing, nurse, so you shall have yours, though I can ill do to be without the sight of my lass. But I'm getting round fast now, Moira, and we'll have a long talk together one of these days."

"Yes, father, dear," assented Moira, and she slipped out.

From the stair-head she saw, to her surprise, that the entrance-door of the cottage stood wide. And in the hall-way at the foot was Dennis Hartigan. She descended to him, and he saluted her gruffly.

"Well," he asked, "and how's your dad to-day?"

"Going on very well," she told him, wondering vaguely why she was conscious of so instinctive a dislike of the ex-steward.

"That's good," he commented. "I'm to be allowed to see him this morning, I believe—by special request, so to speak."

"Yes," said Moira curtly. "I will ask if you can go up." She sought the landing again. The nurse had already stepped out on to it.

"Mr. Hartigan can come up," your father says, she intimated, and added explanatorily, "he heard his voice."

She glanced back into the room.

"Let Mr. Hartigan do the talking, now," she added. The diver nodded.

"I'll try and remember, nurse," he replied, and the door closed, leaving him momentarily alone. He guessed that the nurse had gone to supplement her warning with some words of advice to the visitor.

Swiftly the diver put out an arm to the bureau near him, whipped open a small hinged panel, lifted something out, and thrust it under the counterpane. A footfall sounded on the threshold of the room, the door swung in, and the ex-steward entered.

John Davenal, lying among his pillows, contemplated his visitor with a strange calm, quite unlike the usual weak passivity of the invalid. Dennis Hartigan stepped towards him with nervous strides and an air of awkward sympathy.

"I'm glad to see you again, John," he said; "we were afraid you were going to give us the slip. But, thank goodness, you seem in a fair way to cheat the undertaker."

"Aye," added John Davenal, "and the black-hearted scoundrel who tried to put an end to me."

He drew the bed-clothes up about his throat with his left hand—the right lay beneath the counterpane, hidden from the shoulder down.

"Yes," said the ex-steward, "but, to be candid, John, I am inclined on reflection to think that Moira and Kit are right and that you must have been attacked in mistake for someone else. You yourself can have no enemy who would be likely to do such a thing."

The diver seemed to be gazing into vacancy; a dark smile flickered upon his lips for a moment.

"A man," he answered, "may think he has no enemies, and yet may narrowly escape death at the hands of one. And that enemy, who struck an unsuspecting man at night and in the back, may live to stand, in his turn, face to face with death, and never dream of it."

"Sort of poetic justice, eh?" commented Dennis Hartigan, with a forced laugh, as he sat down by the bed-head. "Well, perhaps you're right. At all events, you are very sensible in making up your mind to leave the beggar to his fate. The police are apparently at their wits' end to find a clue to your assailant, and I gather from that worthy officer, Mr. Ussher, that they are beginning to adopt the theory of mistaken identity as the only means of explaining the attack on you."

John Davenal had changed his position when the ex-steward sat down; the diver, lying on his left side, still confronted his visitor with an odd, vigilant expression.

"I wanted to see you, Dennis," he said, "about—about Moira. We had been talking about her that night; we parted rather abruptly, I fear."

Dennis Hartigan snapped his fingers.

"Don't you worry about that," he replied. "I was a bit hot, myself. However, I've been thinking the matter over, and, at the moment, I won't press my claims to Moira. For the present, she may remain with you."

"For more than the present," said the diver resolutely; "for now and for always, Dennis Hartigan. Let there be no mistake about that. I have told Moira something of the truth; I mean to tell her the whole. Queer things have been passing through my mind as I have lain here, and I am as good as sure that Moira isn't your child, nor Hannah's. And whose child she is I intend to find out, for the lass' own sake and at any cost."

The ex-steward rose slowly from his chair, his teeth showing between his parted lips.

"So that's your game, is it?" he snarled. "Well, as it happens, I was forewarned—how, it matters not. A wink is as good as a nod sometimes, and—and——"

He checked himself—a sudden cast of thought had shadowed his face; the passion died out of it, mastered by an evil shrewdness.

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"You've a rare maggot in your brain now, John Davenal," he exclaimed, leaving his interrupted sentence unfinished to begin a new one, "and I suppose the best thing to do is to let you find out your mistake for yourself?"

The diver studied him.

"Aye," he said, "I expected you'd refuse to fight me, Dennis. But don't think I can't read you. You're laying a plan to play me some dog's trick or another; I can see it in your face. Mark me, Dennis Hartigan, I know you for what you are; seek to injure me or mine and I will put you where by rights you should be now, within the four walls of an English gaol."

Dennis Hartigan's jaw set and he extended a hand whose thick fingers shook with rage and hate.

"You fool!" he cried, in a hoarse whisper, "what do you mean—do you realise that I could throttle you as you lie there?"

His arms hovered over the diver's prostrate form, his nostrils were dilated, and his eyes glowed with a spasm of extravagant ferocity. John Davenal did not flinch.

"Stand away, Dennis Hartigan," he said coolly. "I did not escape your knife to fall a victim to your naked hands."

A low cry, like the suppressed threatening bark of a bull-terrier crouching for a spring, broke from the ex-steward, and catching up a spare pillow from the bed-foot, he swept it towards the diver's head.

Quick as was the motion, it was checked. The pillow remained suspended in the air. A steel-blue ring—the muzzle of a revolver-barrel protruded from the bed-clothes about John Davenal's chest, and the diver's finger nursed the trigger. His keen grey pupils had in them the quiet light of conscious power.

"Put yon pillow down," he said, "and listen to me."

Dennis Hartigan ground his teeth, and obeyed.

"Have your own way," he growled. "I only wanted to frighten you. You've an ill conscience, I'll be bound, or you wouldn't have that thing so handy."

The diver paid no heed to this clumsy attempt at a diversion.

"I don't doubt that you think me a fool, Dennis," he said, "but I should have been a bigger fool than you think me if I couldn't have argued out that the man whose schemes—whatever they were—I was thwarting, was the one most likely to have attempted my life. Especially, Dennis, when that man is such a man as you."

The ex-steward sneered.

"Stow gassing," he exclaimed. "What's your next move?"

John Davenal was silent for a while.

"I would ask you for the whole truth about Moira," he said, "but you would only tell me a skein of lies and laugh in your sleeve at my folly in believing them. There is no one who saw you lurking at my own gate to give me that coward's blow, nor can I swear I saw or heard you myself. You may go, Dennis Hartigan, and if you are wise, you will get out of Groudle. As for Moira, she is mine, and shall remain mine until someone with a better right than you offers to take her from me. Go, and do not cross my path again."

Dennis Hartigan stood irresolute. The diver still covered him with the revolver.

"Be warned, Dennis," the ex-steward was told, "raise a finger to meddle with Moira and, no matter what price I pay for it, I will take away for ever the evil shadow that you have flung across her happiness."

The other laughed. "That means," he added, "that you will swing for me. By Jove, I am almost inclined to let you."

John Davenal lifted the revolver clear of the bedclothes.

"There is more than a single bullet in this," he rejoined significantly, "and Moira has a sweetheart who will take care of her. But whether I died on the scaffold or by my own hand, Dennis Hartigan, Moira would be out of your power. Yet I am loth to stain my soul with blood, and if you will go away I will be content."

His brother-in-law lingered, with clenched fingers and

(*Continued overleaf.*)

WESLEY'S THEORY OF EARTHQUAKES.

"*The cause of earthquakes*," said John Wesley, "*is sin.*" How he reasoned it out is not easy for the average sinner to see. The idea of such a tremendous physical convulsion as an earthquake resulting from the violation of moral law is nonsense in the eyes of modern science. The reverse is more often true. "The cause of a deal of sin," said Hannah Moore, "is bile." *That* we can see through. Bile poisons the brain, and the brain is the organ of the mind. It is certain that all the earthquakes that ever shook this wicked world never did half the damage that is done every year by sleepy stomachs and lazy livers. Generals have lost battles, statesmen have been beaten in diplomacy, workmen have been thrown out of jobs, clergymen have preached poor sermons, and husbands and wives have quarrelled for no reason under the sun but "a touch of liver complaint." The crust of society can never lie quiet with such a force as biliousness under it.

Writing of a time five years ago, a lady asserts that she had not strength to work. She suffered acutely with a sharp stabbing pain down the right side and between the shoulder-blades. Her appetite failed, of course, for Nature never calls for food when she is not in a condition to use it. Still a trifle of sustenance must be taken. The lady took it, digested a bit of it, and suffered great distress from the presence of the rest in the torpid stomach, when, indeed, it was not vomited, as was often the case. We need scarcely add that her sleep was disturbed and failed to refresh her. To quote her own words, "I arose in the morning with a splitting headache and a feeling of utter weakness and prostration. My tongue was furred, I was tired, lacked energy, became irritable and bad tempered, and could have quarrelled with my best friend."

Now what sort of a life is this to lead? What is anybody good for while in such a state as that? What would you wager on your own success in business if you had to pit yourself against other people's sharpness, while you had to fight with a poison-soaked head and a stomach that refused its breakfast? Not a crooked sixpence.

Our correspondent continues: "The doctor told me I was suffering from an enlarged liver, but his medicines gave me no relief, and I began to give up all hope of ever getting better, when I was advised by a friend to try Mother Seigel's Syrup. Before I had finished the first bottle my health improved. As I continued taking the Syrup my health was gradually restored, and I have had no recurrence of my complaint since. If ever I feel run down I take a dose or two of the Syrup and it seems to put new life into me. Signed, Agnes Gatley, 3 Boundary Terrace, Moss Nook, Nr. Cheadle, Ches."

The success of Seigel's Syrup in curing this malady is due to the fact that it goes straight as an arrow to the very root and source of it, the paralysed digestion.

Whatever may be the true theory of Earthquakes we may be sure of one thing anyway—namely that bile in the blood, arising from an arrest of the digestive function, is the hot-bed of more sorrow, pain and death than all the powers at the interior of the earth ever scattered over its surface.

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twitching nostrils, gazing at the prostrate man on the disordered couch. Then, reluctantly, he moved towards the door. The diver's aim followed him indomitably. At length, with a shrug and a muttered volley of profanity, the ex-steward opened the door, slid through, and closed it behind him.

Stealthily he descended the stairs, and, unlatching the hall door at their foot, stepped out unobserved.

TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER.

"Known as Moira Davenal."

The afternoon had grown late and the westering sun stared dazzlingly at the ex-steward as he went down the garden, let himself out at the wicket, and stalked along the edge of the little harbour.

He was muttering viciously in a kind of savage soliloquy—the completeness with which the diver had read him and the suddenness of his discomfiture had entered deep into Dennis Hartigan's mean soul.

The on-coming evening had chilled the warmth of the Spring afternoon and he went in to the Half Brick to drink a glass of spirits and order some food. There was a cheerful fire in the bar-parlour, he ate his meal near it and then sat over the hearth, smoking.

The darkness settled down over Groudle, the bar-parlour filled with its coterie of privileged gossips, and talk and the clink of glass and pewter waxed general. At last Dennis Hartigan awakened sulkily to the invasion of his solitude, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and rising, sauntered out of the Half Brick.

As he passed through the bar of the inn, he checked his watch against the clock over the mantel. The time was half-past nine.

Once outside, the ex-steward struck into the open country, found a stack-yard at the rear of an outlying farm, and mounted beneath the corrugated iron roof that covered the loaf-shaped piles of hay. Here, on a soft and fragrant couch, Dennis Hartigan composed himself for a species of cat-nap. So lightly did he sleep that each of the chimed quarters floating from the distant parish church disturbed him.

One by one he marked them attentively. At the second quarter after eleven, he shook off his slumbers, descended, and made for the ring-fence that shut in the park of Groudle Tower. Climbing it, he entered the demesnes beyond, and in due course, gained the grim, domed edifice where, in their last cold slumber, lay the former holders of the great estate.

The ex-steward sat down on a low-growing bough in the shadow of a plantation; he fidgeted uneasily on his extempore seat and swung his legs in frequent spasms of restlessness. Finally he got up and walked out upon the turf that described a circle about the grassy hollow which contained the windowless stone building.

His eyes, ranging this way and that through the dusk, perceived at length an indistinct, moving figure that shunned the moonlight and darted from shadow to shadow on the fringe of the plantation.

Dennis Hartigan took refuge behind a breast-high clump of evergreens and waited. Crossing the glade in front of him, the figure paused, and, to see the better, lifted from her face a corner of a dark and heavy shawl. The wearer was Lady Tarleton.

The ex-steward stayed where he was, enjoying her perplexity awhile. As she passed on, with a gesture of impatience, he stepped out and halted in her path. She looked up and saw him.

"Oh," she said; "so you are here?"

"And what is equally to the purpose," retorted Dennis Hartigan impudently; "you are. Have you brought the money?"

"I have," he was told; "three thousand pounds in bank-notes."

"Good!" exclaimed the ex-steward; "let me have a squint at them."

Lady Tarleton hesitated.

"Might we—might we not be observed here?" she asked, almost nervously. "I have come as cautiously as I could, of course, yet there are the game-keepers to think of. The park is a haunt of ground-game poachers and the keepers are always on the alert."

"Humph!" said Dennis Hartigan; "well, we'll be on the safe side and get back into the plantation. But I'll want a glimpse of those notes and there's not much light except in the open."

Lady Tarleton unfolded a package and held it out, retaining it by a corner. Dennis Hartigan fluttered the flimsy sheets, straining his eyes over them in the moonbeams.

"One, two, three, four, five, six," he counted; "and for five hundred a piece. Very well, I'll tell you what I promised to before I ask for 'em."

He strode into the group of young trees behind them and Lady Tarleton followed him.

"Well," she said, and her voice quivered with eagerness; "where is the child?"

"In Groudle," answered the ex-steward.

"In Groudle!" gasped Lady Tarleton; "how—how imprudent!"

"It pays sometimes to do imprudent things, my lady," retorted Dennis Hartigan; "it stood to reason we wouldn't be expected to plant the kid down so near home. Consequently she was safest there if anything was ever suspected. But that wasn't our chief reason, we wanted the child carefully nursed up; if she was badly-managed and died, where were we?"

"Y—yes," stammered the other; "but there are—there were plenty of good foster-mothers out of Groudle."

"Maybe," admitted the ex-steward; "however, we did better than find a foster-mother. We put her with Hannah's own people and there she is to this day. We told them her right Christian name, Moira, and she is known as Moira Davenal. She is supposed to be John Davenal's daughter."

Lady Tarleton tottered.

"A bit startling, isn't it?" Dennis said; "and now you know the truth and I've earned my three thou."

He took the notes audaciously from her grasp. The action served to recall Lady Tarleton from her stupor.

"Oh," she murmured, "it is impossible—it can't be!"

The ex-steward laughed.

"It's true," he said; "go and look at the girl. Look at her red hair—that's her mother's; look at her blue eyes—those are her father's."

Lady Tarleton clutched his arm.

"Yes, yes!" she exclaimed; "I believe you. I see it all now. And you will do as you said? You—you will get her out of the way? She must be got out of the way—for more reasons than you can guess. She must, I say!"

Dennis Hartigan flung off the eager, desperate grasp. "I'll do my part of the bargain," he answered; "not but what I could make a better, if I went to Sir Guy Vanbrugh, who's sweet on the girl. He wouldn't mind being brought, through his wife, to the ownership of Groudle Tower."

Lady Tarleton snatched at him again. "You won't," she said; "you sha'n't. I will pay anything, anything. It would be ruin for me—ruin! Guy Vanbrugh is to marry my daughter—it has always been understood!"

The ex-steward released himself. "Make your mind easy," he rejoined; "I've a bone of my own to pick with John Davenal. No man shall ever say he bested me and didn't live to regret it. Good-night to you, my lady, and—wait."

He turned abruptly from her and vanished into the depths of the plantation. Lady Tarleton remained standing, lost in thought. The sound of a voice aroused her—a voice not that of Dennis Hartigan. She retreated more closely into her place of concealment.

"Mind how you go, Mr. Ussher, sir," said the voice, and the tread of cautious feet went by. Lady Tarleton peered out and saw, by the light of a fitful moonbeam, that struggled into the grove, the tall form of the detective himself. With him was a man in the rough garments and the hard cloth gaiters of a gamekeeper.

(To be continued.)

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COMPLEXION AND HAIR.

We receive, from day to day, many letters from readers asking us how to clear the complexion of Blackheads, Freckles, Tan, Redness, etc. The most marvellous preparation that we know of is "PERALIA," manufactured by the "Peralia" Perfumery Co. of North Shields. This wonderful liquid, while it instantly beautifies the complexion, and removes all obnoxious excrescences, such as pimples and blotches, is perfectly harmless, and its purity is guaranteed by a well-known medical man, whose certificate accompanies each bottle. Besides acting on the above, "PERALIA," by frequent application, will remove wrinkles, crow's feet, and, in fact, entirely rejuvenate the features. This is due to its penetrating action, as it makes its way through the pores of the skin, exerting its beneficial effect on each and every one, and cleansing it effectually from dirt, callous growth, and decayed tissue. "PERALIA" is, in our opinion, the only beauty specific that does its work in such a thorough and scientific manner. It is the most successful remedy we have to aid us in the fight against the ravages of either Time or Disease. If you feel that your beauty is waning, or that fine complexion being marred by disfiguring humours, you should at once have recourse to "PERALIA."

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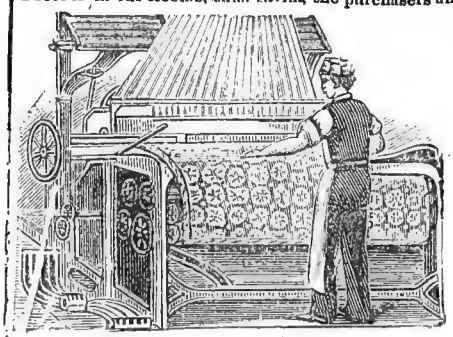

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An Impossible Task.

"Arthur says he wants to get out of debt before he marries me." "I didn't suppose he'd trifle with any girl's affections in that way."

A Deep-Laid Plot.

George: "Who is that beautiful girl over there?" Amelia: "Why, George, that's a mirror—it's me!" George: "————?" Amelia (blushing): "Yes, George."

How the Colour Came.

She (poetical): "Do you notice, darling, what beautiful azure tints the sun lends to the bosom of the ocean?" He (practical): "That, my dear, is the dye out of some of those cheap bathing suits."

Why She Loved.

"And do you love me for what I am, or for what I was?" cooingly asked the millionaire with one foot in the grave. "For what you will be, dearest!" ambiguously replied the poor girl with a living to make.

He'd Overdone It.

She: "You remember what you promised before we were married? You said you would make every effort to make yourself worthy of me." He: "Yes, and the result was that I overdid it, and made myself better than you deserve."

A Doubtful Compliment.

Miss Pretty: "I don't see how you whistle through your fingers that way. I'm sure I could never do it." Mr. Goodheart (wishing to compliment her delicate little hands): "No, Miss Pretty, if you should try it, your whole hand would slip into your mouth."

What She Wouldn't Do.

"Oh," she suddenly explained, "I wish I were a man!" "What would you do?" he asked. "I'll not say what I would do, but there is one thing I will confess that I wouldn't do." "And that is——?" "I wouldn't sit as if I had handcuffs on when I happened to be alone with a girl."

Foiled Again!

"I know I am poor," he protested, "while you are the heiress to at least half a million!" "Barely £150," she faltered. "Foiled again!" hissed Antonio McFogarty, the income-tax assessor, tearing off his false whiskers and plunging away into the night, while mocking laughter rang in his ears.

Her Valuable Present.

"I asked for a lock of your hair," he said reproachfully, "and now I find that, instead of giving me a lock from your own head, you gave me a lock of false hair." "And you doubt me because of that?" she asked. "Naturally," he replied. "But you do not realise that the false hair is the more costly?" Thus were his suspicions put at rest.

We're Made of Dust, You Know.

He: "I could kiss the dust you walk on." She: "What's the matter with the dust that does the walking?"

What He'd Like to Get Her.

She: "We must get the cook something for the summer." He: "Yes. I'd like to get her another situation."

Must Be Kissed.

He: "Your sweet face is my book of life. I swear it." She: "But your oath is not valid until you have kissed the book."

Thought She was First.

Millie: "What does this motto on the ring mean?" Willie: "Faithful to the last." "The idea! I thought I was the first!"

Fine Place to Get Butter.

She: "I understand that matter weighing one pound on the moon's surface, if transferred to the earth, would weigh six pounds." He: "Can't you manage to buy your butter up there, dear?"

No Fear On That Account.

"When you play that sonata," said a teacher to his pupil, "you must show off your fingering as much as possible." "Don't you fear about that," she responded; "I'll have a finger-ring on every finger."

Her Gentle Hint.

"You sketch with a free hand," remarked the professor, who had been critically examining her portfolio. "Entirely free," said the lady, as she cast down her eyes in soft confusion, and waited for the professor to follow up the opening.

It was Not a Flower!

Just she and I, all all alone beneath the stars so calm and bright; I told her that to me her cheeks were like twin lilies pure and white, but in the morning, as I brushed my powdered vest for half an hour, I realised the lilies must have been some other kind of *flour*.

A Difficult Point.

Chappie: "What is troubling you, deah boy?" Chollie: "Maud says I must awsk heh fathaw's consent, and I don't know how to manage it this time of year. If I leave the door open when I go into his office I'll let in a dwaght and make him angwy; but if I close it I cut off my wetweat."

His Part of the Bargain.

New Son-in-law: "Ahem! You remember, Mr. Oldchap, you said that after we were married you would assist me in the matter of furnishing a house." Mr. Oldchap: "Certainly, my boy, certainly. Come round the corner with me and I'll introduce you to a friend of mine who is in the instalment business."

Feminine Jealousy.

Miss Jellus: "Your bedroom must be a very healthy place, dear?" Miss Prettiface: "What makes you think so?" "Because I have noticed that when you are downstairs sometimes you are dreadfully pale; but if you go up into your bedroom for a short time, you come down with a beautiful colour!"

Proper Sort of Work.

He was an unkempt-looking fellow, and he stopped at the suburban residence and asked for employment. The lady of the house was superintending the transplanting of the plants. The door of the greenhouse was open. "Are you a gardener?" asked the woman. "Ain't had much experience." "Can't you plant these flowers?" "I hate to risk spoilin' 'em, ma'am." "Then what can you do?" "Well, ma'am, if you'll give me one o' your husband's cigars," he replied meditatively, "I'll sit in the greenhouse an' smoke out the insects that's eatin' up the leaves of them rose-bushes."

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Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Should He Give Presents?

"JOHN R." wishes to know if it is necessary for him to give his sweetheart presents. He has been engaged for a year, but so far has never given her anything. She has never hinted anything on the subject. "JOHN R." has not a very large income, and is saving as much as he can against their approaching wedding.

* * * * *

I do not think it is necessary to give your sweetheart presents solely for the sake of doing so. Love should not require to be proved in such a material way. If you remember her birthday, and perhaps Christmas, under the circumstances you might regard your duty as done in that respect. When a man once starts giving a girl presents, he more or less pledges himself to continue doing so, which often means a great waste of money. You are better advised in saving up for the future.

❦❦❦

Testing a Lover.

"RENE" is in love with a young fellow, but cannot decide whether or not he returns the feeling. He is very loving, she says, but has not said whether or not he likes being with her. She has been with him for about three years, and though he has often asked her to go with him to the theatre, she has always refused. Would it be correct to accept such invitations?

* * * * *

You can scarcely expect the fellow to prove whether he loves you if you do not give him an opportunity of declaring himself. If you are so fond of him, I should accept as many invitations from him as he offers. He may be as doubtful as to your love for him as you are of his for you. Go to the theatre with him, and see how things develop.

❦❦❦

A Faint Heart.

"FAINTHEARTED" knows a young lady whom he greatly admires. He often passes her on his way home, but has never had the courage to address her. He cannot obtain an introduction to her, and knows nobody who is acquainted with her, but is aware that she has not got a lover. What would I advise him to do?

* * * * *

In the first instance get a copy of *Pearson's Weekly* for April 2nd, in which you will find an article entitled "Strategy for Sweethearts." It will give you some instances similar to your own, in which fainthearted men have ultimately succeeded in winning fair ladies. If you lack courage you should try to devise some means like those sketched out for getting to know the young lady you refer to.

A Tale of Two Girls.

"DONALD" is engaged, but early this winter went away from home for a long tour. While away he met a girl with whom he fell violently in love. She did not appear to object to his advances, and even allowed him to kiss her. After some weeks of flirtation, she incidentally told him she was engaged herself. It was a great shock to him. When he returned home he again saw his own *fiancée*, and after a day or two in her society felt he loved her as much as ever. A week or so later, he again met the other girl, and was as violently enamoured of her as before. Which of the two girls is in my opinion the one "DONALD" really loves at heart?

* * * * *

Before even considering your own feelings, "DONALD," there is the question of honour. You are engaged to a girl who evidently possesses your affection. No matter what infatuation you might develop, can you, as an honourable man, wish to act in a shabby way towards her?

* * * * *

Further, the other girl is, you say, herself engaged. She appears to me to be a flirt. I don't imagine she really cares for you. Probably the thought that she was gradually drawing your affections from your own *fiancée* inspired her with a mischievous feeling. I should see as little of her as possible. Stick to the girl who has proved her love for you, and with whom you say you are quite happy. You will soon get over an infatuation.

❦❦❦

Feeding the Husband's Friend.

"FRANCES" is a married woman whose husband brings home friends to dinner or supper. She likes to treat them as well as possible, as they are very often business friends, yet it generally happens that she has nothing in the house for more than two. How should I advise her to arrange on such occasions?

* * * * *

Your husband ought not to bring home people without giving you a hint first. It is very inconsiderate to a housewife. But if it happens that he cannot help himself, it would be a good plan for you to have things in the house ready for such occasions.

* * * * *

Say you stored a tin or so of soup, some curry powders, and some savouries, such as anchovies, sardines, and so on you might be able at very short notice to put on quite a nice little spread for your husband's guests. For advice on the preparations of them I advise you to write to ISOBEL in *Pearson's Weekly*, who is expert at those things.

❦❦❦

An Estrangement.

"ELLA" used constantly to meet a young man, and thought that he was in love with her. He used to seek her out, and to take her to places of amusement. They lost sight of each other for some months, and now he scarcely even speaks to her. Do I think he can no longer care for her, or what would explain such conduct?

* * * * *

Evidently your relations are not the same as before. I suppose he has met another girl, or more probably is worried about something, and is, therefore, not socially disposed. But speculate as one may, it is very difficult for a woman to get the real reason for a man's seeming estrangement.

* * * * *

Men's interests in life are so varied, and if we went into the matter, we should probably find that we women occupy very much less of their thoughts than we imagine. I should avoid worrying the young man. Treat him as distantly as he treats you. If he cares for you he will sooner or later seek you out again.

Cynthia

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Constipation

AND LIVER COMPLAINT COMPLETELY CURED.

MRS. S. NICHOLLS, Edge Hill Lane, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, suffered for two years from liver troubles, constipation, and but recently was completely cured of both complaints. Interviewed by a *Birmingham Telegram* reporter with regard to this cure, Mrs. Nicholls said:

"I used to have dizzy sounds."

"For two years I have been a dreadful sufferer from pains arising from liver complaint. They were the worst in my head, but I also had them across my sides, back, and shoulders. I used to have dizzy rounds, which made me feel very bad; indeed, I never felt well. In consequence of acute constipation my sufferings were severe, and I had painful sensations across the region of my kidneys. I obtained some medicine from a doctor, but this did not give me any permanent relief. A short time back I saw a testimonial in a local paper from someone who had suffered worse than I did for years with liver complaint, and had been cured by Bile Beans for Biliousness. I determined to try Bile Beans, and sent for a Box. The effect they had upon me was highly beneficial. The pains gradually ceased, and the attacks of giddiness became less frequent. By persevering with the Beans the constipation has now entirely left me. I am also cured of the liver complaint, and am glad to say I now enjoy good health." "Would you recommend Bile Beans to other sufferers?" queried the reporter. "Indeed I would. Bile Beans have done me such a great deal of good that I can recommend them to anyone suffering as I did. You can make what use you like of these few facts, for I should like others besides myself to benefit by the use of Bile Beans."

Bile Beans for Biliousness are the product of modern scientific research, and, therefore thoroughly up-to-date. They do not merely purge, giving temporary relief only, and leaving the patient weakened, like the out-of-date, so-called remedies of forty or fifty years ago, which contain probably aloes, mercury, and other harmful drugs. Bile Beans, without the slightest discomfort, prompt the liver and digestive organs to act in Nature's normal way, leaving those organs strengthened and stimulated to continue the performance of their duties without further assistance. They produce a gentle action on the bowels, curing or preventing constipation, cleansing the stomach, and ridding the system of all impurities. Do not be misled by claims of half a hundred pills in the box where probably four to six constitute a dose, and the doses cannot be discontinued. One Bile Bean is one dose. They can be discontinued after the cure is effected; they are purely vegetable; they do not contain any harmful drugs, and they are the safest family medicine.

Bile Beans for Biliousness are a permanent and speedy cure for Headache, Influenza, Constipation, Piles, Liver Troubles, Bad Breath, Liver Chill, Indigestion, Flatulence, Dizziness, Pimples, Blood Impurities, Buzzing in the Head, Debility, Spring Ailments, Anæmia, and all Female Ailments. Of all Medicine Vendors, Price 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. per box (large box contains three times quantity small size).

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